

*This is a draft, only,
not to be used for
reference*

A STUDY OF THE MILITARY TOPOGRAPHY
AND SITES ASSOCIATED WITH THE 1814-15
NEW ORLEANS CAMPAIGN

Presented to the Jean Lafitte National
Historical Park

June, 1985

Betsy Swanson
825 Calle Mejia #1223
Santa Fe, N.M. 87501

"The international struggle for the northern coast of the Gulf of Mexico and the mouth of the Mississippi River persisted actually from about 1698 to 1815."

Wilburt S. Brown, The Amphibious Campaign for West Florida and Louisiana 1814-1815, p.163.

"The Battle of New Orleans is second in importance only to Washington's victory at Yorktown."

Thomas P. Abernethy, The South in the New Nation, 1789-1819, p.402.

~~SUMMARY OF REPORT~~

This study defines the military topography and identifies the sites associated with the four military actions of the British Invasion of 1814-15 that occurred on the Mississippi River below New Orleans. The study area begins about two miles below the French Quarter on the East Bank and Algiers Point on the West Bank, and stretches for eight miles down both banks of the river to the top bend of English Turn.

The report consists of a written description of individual sites and their associated military activities, illustrated with photographs, old maps and old engravings; and five large location maps delineating each site and battle action in relation to the "battlefield" at the time of the actions and as it exists today.

The large location maps consist of a base map and four transparent overlays. The base map represents the present-day streets in relation to the 1814-15 plantations, roads, canals, levees, and buildings. The overlays each represent one of the four separate battles of December 23 and 28, 1814, and January 1 and 8, 1815, along with important movements between each battle. The overlays show the troop movements and battery sites in relation to the plantation features of the 1814-15 topography. The numbers of troops and their commanders and weapons are shown on the maps.

The written report starts on the East Bank and moves downriver. When it reaches the limits of battle activity

on the East Bank, it crosses the river and moves up the West Bank. Emphasis is given to descriptions of sites which appear to be extant in some form, either in surface features or archaeological resources. The battle actions related to each site are explained, and the significance of the sites are historically evaluated.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The majority of sites associated with the Battle of New Orleans are located in St. Bernard Parish, and the success of this study owes much to the assistance of the governing body of that parish. The generous cooperation of St. Bernard Parish's Assistant Historian William Hyland is especially appreciated. To aid the execution of this work, use of parish facilities was provided by Ashley Henderson, President of the St. Bernard Parish Police Jury, and David B. Farbes, Chief Administrative Officer of St. Bernard Parish. Helpful services were also rendered in St. Bernard Parish by Edwin M. Roy, Editor and Publisher of the St. Bernard Voice, and Anthony A. Fernandez, Jr.

In New Orleans, research assistance was provided by Jane Stevens and her staff in the Louisiana Collection of the Tulane University Library; Wilber E. Meneray and his staff in the Special Collections Division of the Tulane Library; Collin B. Hamer, Jr. and his staff in the Louisiana Division of the New Orleans Public Library; and Rose Lambert of the Louisiana State Museum Library. Work space for the drafting of the large maps and completion of the report was donated by Bethlyn McCloskey, long a supporter of the Jean Lafitte National Historical Park.

The facilitation of Lafitte Park Superintendant James Isenogle has been appreciated, as well as the helpful suggestions of members of his staff: Historian Mike Strock, Inter-

pretation Chief Mike Livingston, and Acting Chalmette Unit Manager Tom Tankersley.

The help and cooperation of Archaeologist Ted Birkedal and the facilitation of Historian Melody Webb, both of the National Park Service's Southwest Regional Office in Santa Fe, have been especially appreciated. Dr. Birkedal's recent archaeological discoveries at Chalmette served as a partial basis of this study.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology employed in this study consisted of a process of achieving concurrences between documentary research and field exploration in order to align present-day topography with that of the 1814-15 battle geography. In this process, three aspects of the historical landscape were systematically applied to the modern urbanscape and plotted on maps with this report: the natural features, the agricultural and domestic features, and the military features.

To set the scene of human geography, information was gathered concerning the recent geomorphic history of this portion of the Mississippi River, its natural levees and bordering swamps. The approximate position of the river in 1814-15 was plotted using geological studies, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers bank line and levee set-back maps, old property survey maps and old aerial photographs. A meander shift of about 2000 feet has occurred along a portion of the river's battlefield course since 1815. This distance, about equal to the river's width, has been subtracted from the West Bank and added to the East Bank. The site of the night battle of December 23, 1814, which took place on the river bank, is now located far back from the river; the position of the Schooner Carolina in that battle is now well inland.

In 1814-15, the river had advanced somewhat from the plantations along the bank in this area. Old maps show that

the plantation buildings were fronted by a series of levees, each built ^touward as the batture built up. These old levee lines, with their parallel roads and ditches, are clearly visible on aerial photographs of the 1930s and 1940s. At that time, the area was still largely farm land and some of the buildings that witnessed the Battle of New Orleans were still standing and are visible in the photographs.

Further upriver, in the area of the Chalmette National Historical Park where the battles of December 28, January 1 and January 8 occurred, the river has removed a portion of the bankline. However, not as much bankline has been lost as was formerly assumed.

When the Chalmette battlefield was established as a park in the 1930s, survey errors placed much of the battle ground in the river. Recent archaeological testing by Ted Birkedal, National Park Service archaeologist, uncovered the foundations of the Rodriguez Plantation House which was supposed to have been taken by the river. Subsequent archaeological work by Birkedal located Battery #3 on the American line (the "Pirate" Battery). This was also supposed to have been taken by the river.

Birkedal's work, and the historical research conducted for Birkedal's study by National Park Service Military Historian Jerome Greene, served as the starting point of this site identification study. The methodology explained above was applied by moving outward in all directions from Birkedal's

newly aligned positions within the Chalmette Park property. This report does not detail the sites or historical geography within the park property as this area is covered in Birkedal's report.

The correction of past topographical misalignments required reinvestigation of primary research materials, in preference to secondary sources. Examples of materials used for topographical documentation are illustrated in this report.

The earliest detailed map that shows the course of the river and the plantations lining its banks is the 1723 "Carte Particulier..." in the Newberry Library, Chicago. This map shows the river bending upward, rather than downward, along the course of the 1814-15 battle area below New Orleans. This upward bend is duplicated on modern geological maps that show point bar deposits and meander shifts in the vicinity of New Orleans. The upward curve is also duplicated in the marks of the old levee lines on the old aerial photographs.

During the 18th century, the point of the upward bend of this curve was named Pointe St. Antoine. In the late 18th century, this point or bend was located on the Bienvenu Plantation, at the present-day Kaiser Aluminum Plant. In the early 18th century, this point or bend was located further upriver, probably within the Chalmette Park property and perhaps in the vicinity of that tract which, at the time of the Battle of New Orleans, was the Rodriguez Plantation.

Nineteenth century survey maps show that most of the bankline in the vicinity of the Chalmette battleground continued to slowly build outward until about 1907 when construction of the Chalmette Slip began to cause erosion *conclusion based on?* flow. Across the river, where the Battle of the West Bank took place, there appears to have been little change in the bank line through the years. The greatest land loss on the West Bank has occurred downriver, where the British landed their attack, on what was then the Andry Plantation.

The greatest accretion has occurred on the East Bank, between present-day Paris Road and Mereau. At Paris Road *Mereau* was a crevasse area in which the depositions of overflow were laid upon the route of an abandoned St. Bernard Delta distributary channel. In 1814-15, the highest ground with the widest natural levee was occupied by the de La Ronde Plantation. The British first attempted their entry via this ridge, but could not bring their barges far enough up Bayou Bienvenu.

Archival documentation of plantation properties helped to establish the recent geomorphic history of the area, and the geological lineaments helped to confirm the agricultural features and property locations. These positionings were then used for the plotting of each military site, troop movement and battle action.

Old survey plats show the precise distances at various dates of plantation buildings, as well as road and canals, from the river bank line. These helped to varify the movement of the river and the position of the river in 1814-15

in relation to present-day geography. Also useful in this respect, is the course of the old Mexican Gulf Railroad, laid out in the 1830s on the archival plats, behind the plantation buildings. The former route of this early railroad became Rue des Bon Enfants (Good Children Street), and is now, in part, Judge Perez Drive. Some distances can therefore be measured from this modern thoroughfare.

Aside from the site identifications made by Birkedal within the Chalmette Park property, other known points of the battle topography exist, notably the ruins of the de La Ronde House standing in the middle of the St. Bernard Highway, and the High School which, until recent years, was the site of the Lacoste House. These, as well as extant plantation roads and canals, have served as points from which to plot the measurements and the mapping.

The 19th century survey plats of the Surveyor General's Office are most useful in aligning the 1814-15 plantation setting with that of modern day. These plats were the result of surveys made by the United States government to verify land ownership. Work began on surveys for the plats following the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, and continued for much of the 19th century. The so-called "grant lines," red dashed-dotted lines, appear on modern U.S. Geological Survey Quadrangle maps in relation to modern streets and features. The 1967 Chalmette Quadrangle shows the "grant lines" extending out into the middle of the river along that portion of the West Bank that has been cut away. Many of the quadrangle

"grant lines" are the same plantation property divisions that existed during the Battle of New Orleans. Along these property lines ran the fences, canals and roads mentioned in the battle accounts as figuring in battle actions. Thus, a number of military movements can be plotted according to present-day streets.

The earliest accurate maps of the river and bordering land are the U.S. Coast Survey Charts of 1873-74 (issued 1878). The position of the river is accurately shown on these maps, and many surviving 1814-15 plantation features are also shown. These and other early maps and air photographs were photographically over-laid on modern-day maps to aid in plotting the maps for this report.

Finally, the military records were consulted and the battle sites and actions were superimposed on the plantation geography which had been correctly aligned with the modern-day geography. Accounts by battle participants and official reports were chiefly used. Of these, the most useful for site identification were the writings of Jackson's engineers, Majors Latour and Tatum, and the British artillery commander Colonel Alexander Dickson. Latour's and Dickson's maps are also among the most useful of the battle maps.

Other contemporary accounts give less emphasis to measurements of distances and fewer careful descriptions of the physical land features and military installations.

Nonetheless, much additional site identification and troop movement information was obtained from the following battle participants (listed in the bibliography):

Cooke, Ewart, Forrest, Gleig, Hill, Michell, Mullins (court martial), Reid and Eaton, and Surtees.

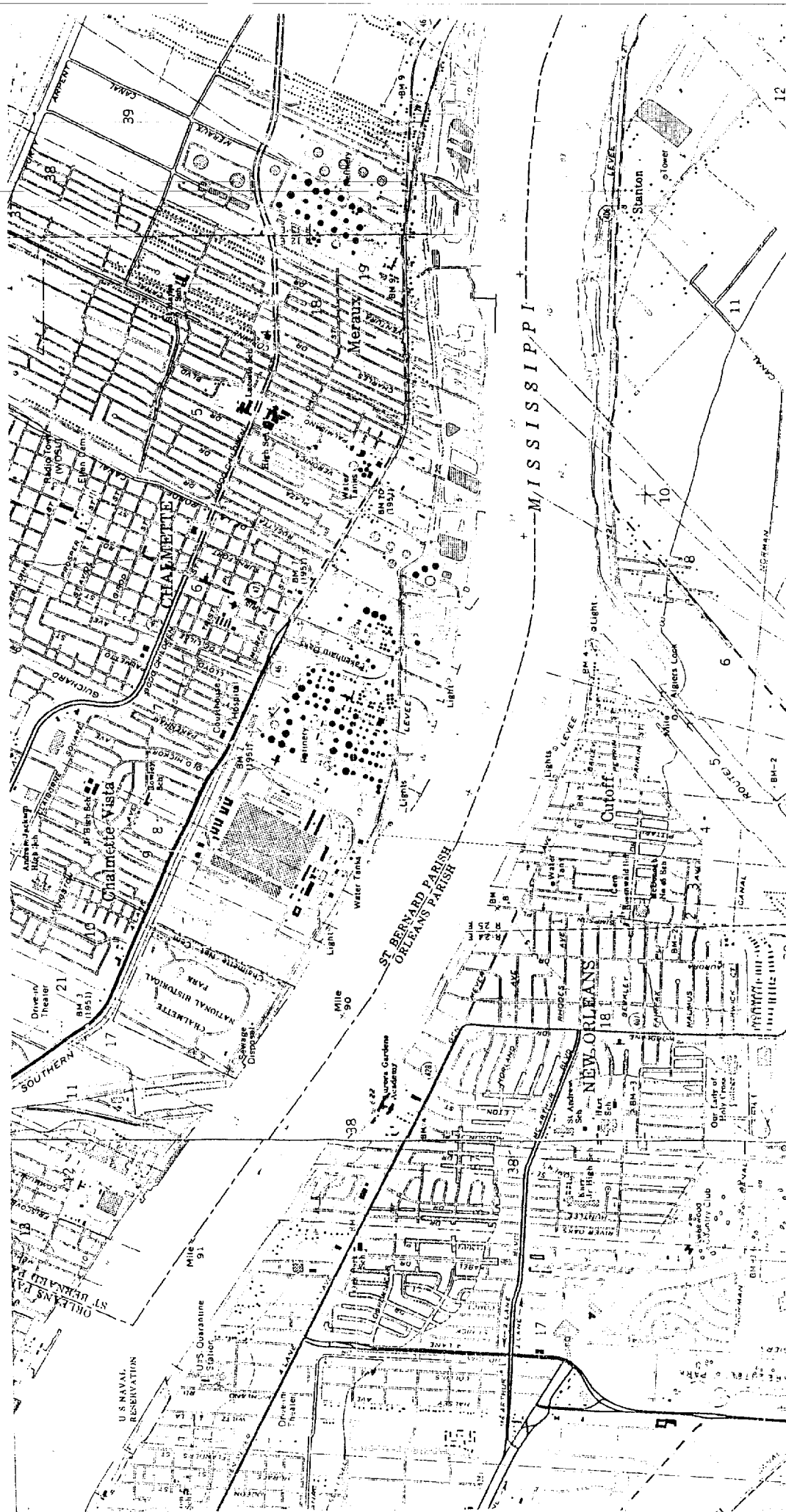
Post-battle accounts by non-participants are less reliable, but nonetheless contain much useful information. Some 19th century writers interviewed eye-witnesses and described visits to the battlefield. Old tourist guides have also been helpful in making site identifications.

None of the battle maps, American or British, are accurate in terms of modern standards of cartography. Most appear to be copied from a limited number of initial battlefield map-making efforts. With some changes and variations, they duplicate errors in topography and stylistic methods of execution. For example, all of the large, over-all battle maps made by the British seem to have been based on that of Lt. John Peddie of the Quartermaster's Department. One of Peddie's roles was that of a scout; he had been sent to make a reconnaissance in advance of the British Army. He made a large map, as well as subsequent copies, of the entire invasion and battle area. It appears that other members of the British force then copied his maps, in both topography and drafting style.

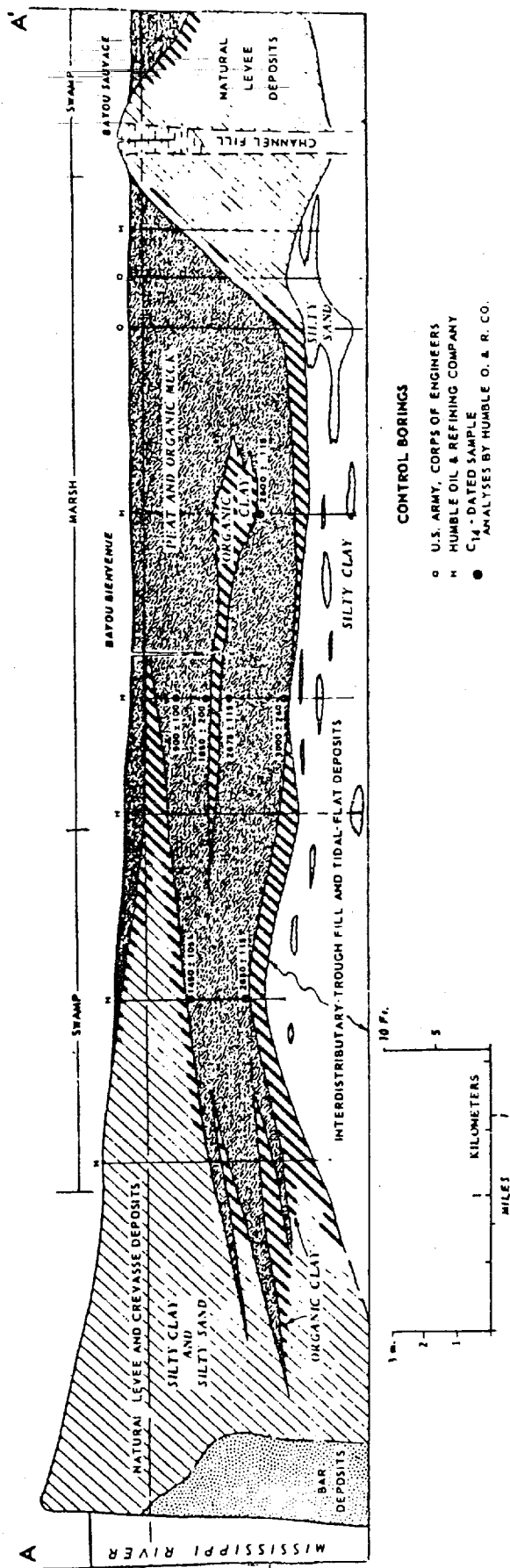
Maps that survive in published form, such as those of Latour and Reid, may have been subject to alterations or

ommissions on the part of the engravers. Of the numerous pictorial illustrations of the battle of January 8th, only that of Jean Hyacinthe Laclotte has any realistic accuracy. Therefore, additional source material was used to confirm the information on the old battle maps in the preparation of this report.

On the maps with this report, the positioning of some features and battle actions is only approximate. The locations are given as best as can be established by available documentation. The base map, upon which the historical topography was positioned and over which the battle maps were traced, is a map of "Urban St. Bernard Parish" drafted in January 1981 for the St. Bernard Parish Planning Commission. At the bottom of the map, a warning is given: "This base map to be used for general planning purposes only. Survey measurements are not to be made from this map." Nonetheless, the site locations on the maps with this report are approximately correct.

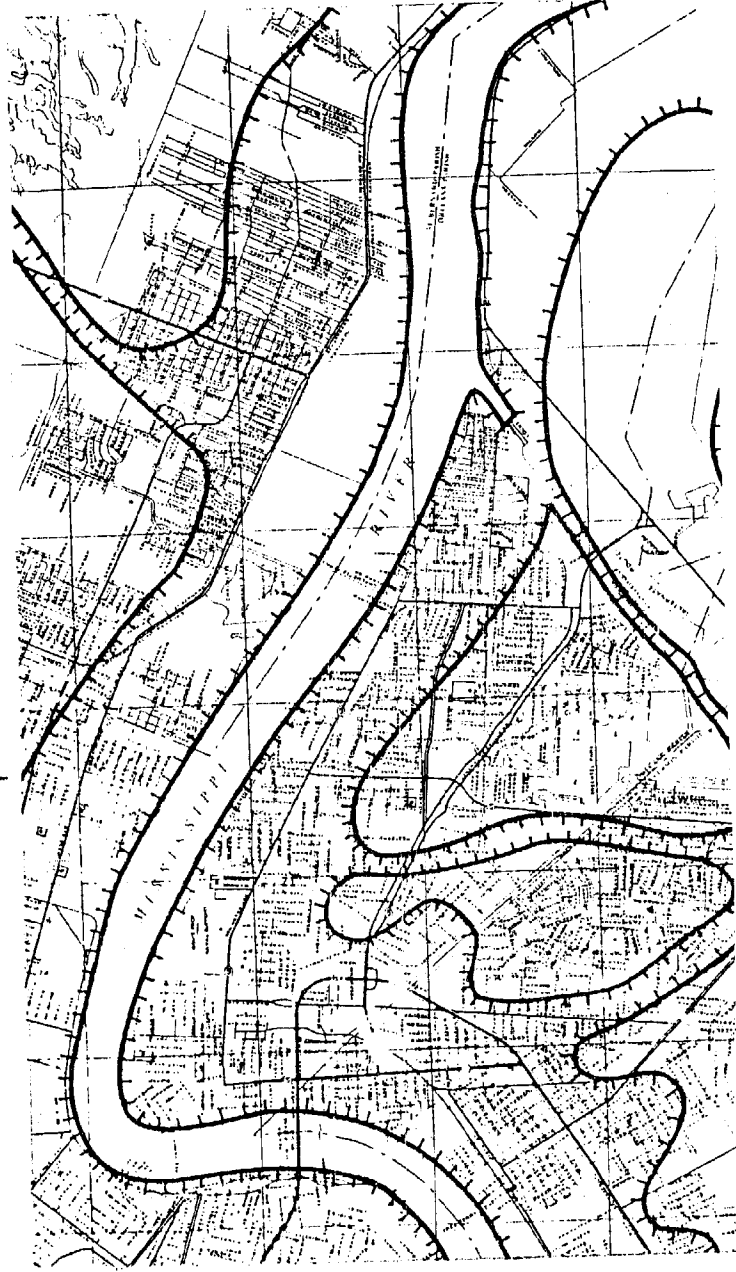


Area covered by the four battles of the British invasion of 1814-15 on the river banks below New Orleans. New Orleans East U.S.G.S. Quadrangle, 1966, photorevised 1972 and 1979, left; and Chalmette U.S.G.S. Quadrangle, 1967, photorevised 1972 and 1979, right.

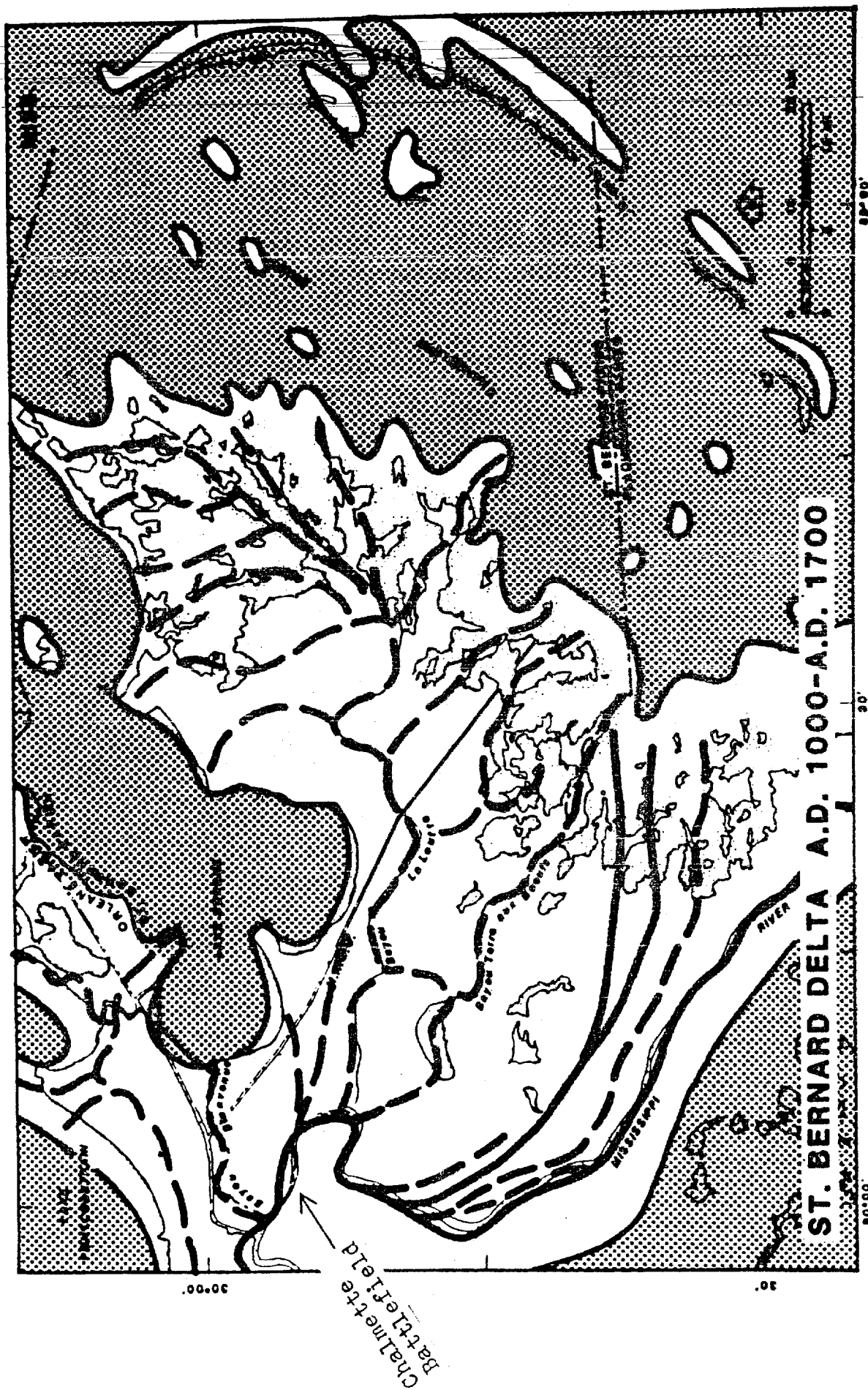


Cross-section A - A' (area of de La Ronde Plantation) in "Distribution and thickness of peat deposits in the vicinity of New Orleans" (from Fisk, 1960), showing natural levee and crevasse deposits.

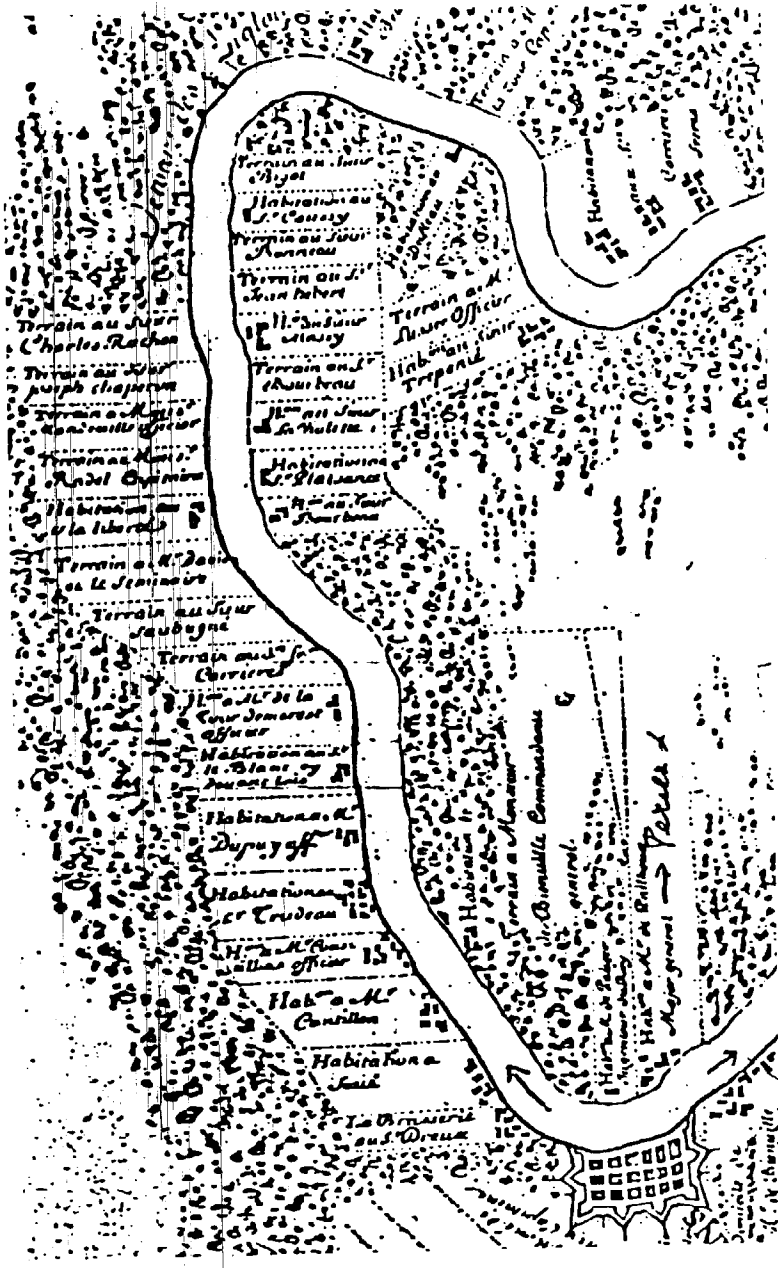
BATTLE AREA



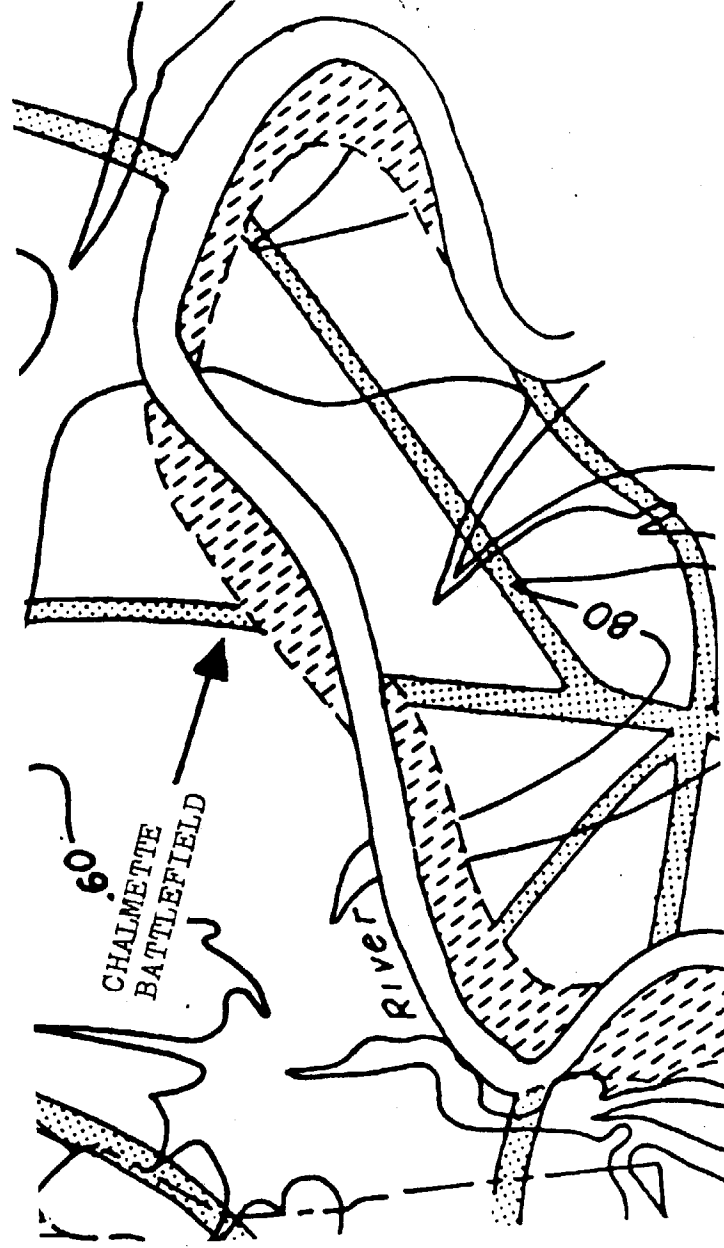
Width of natural levee deposits, indicating approximate vicinity of 1814-15 swamp line, on both sides of the river below the Vieux Carré. Shown on a modern street map. (Snowden, 1980)



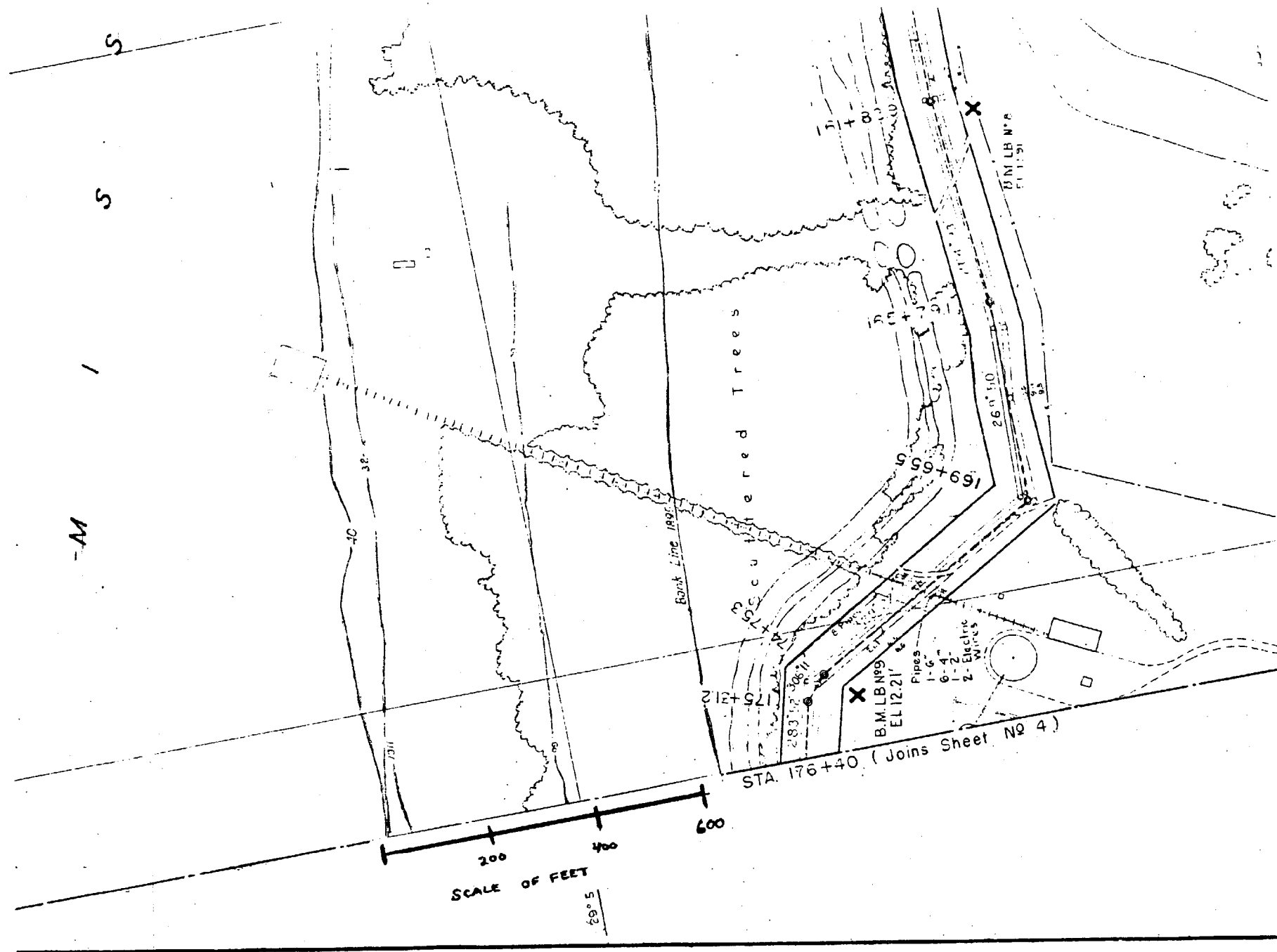
A sequence in St. Bernard Delta building. Note position of river in 1700 and today at Chalmette. From D. Wiseman et al., Cultural resources survey of the Mississippi River-Gulf Outlet, New Orleans and St. Bernard Parishes, 1979.



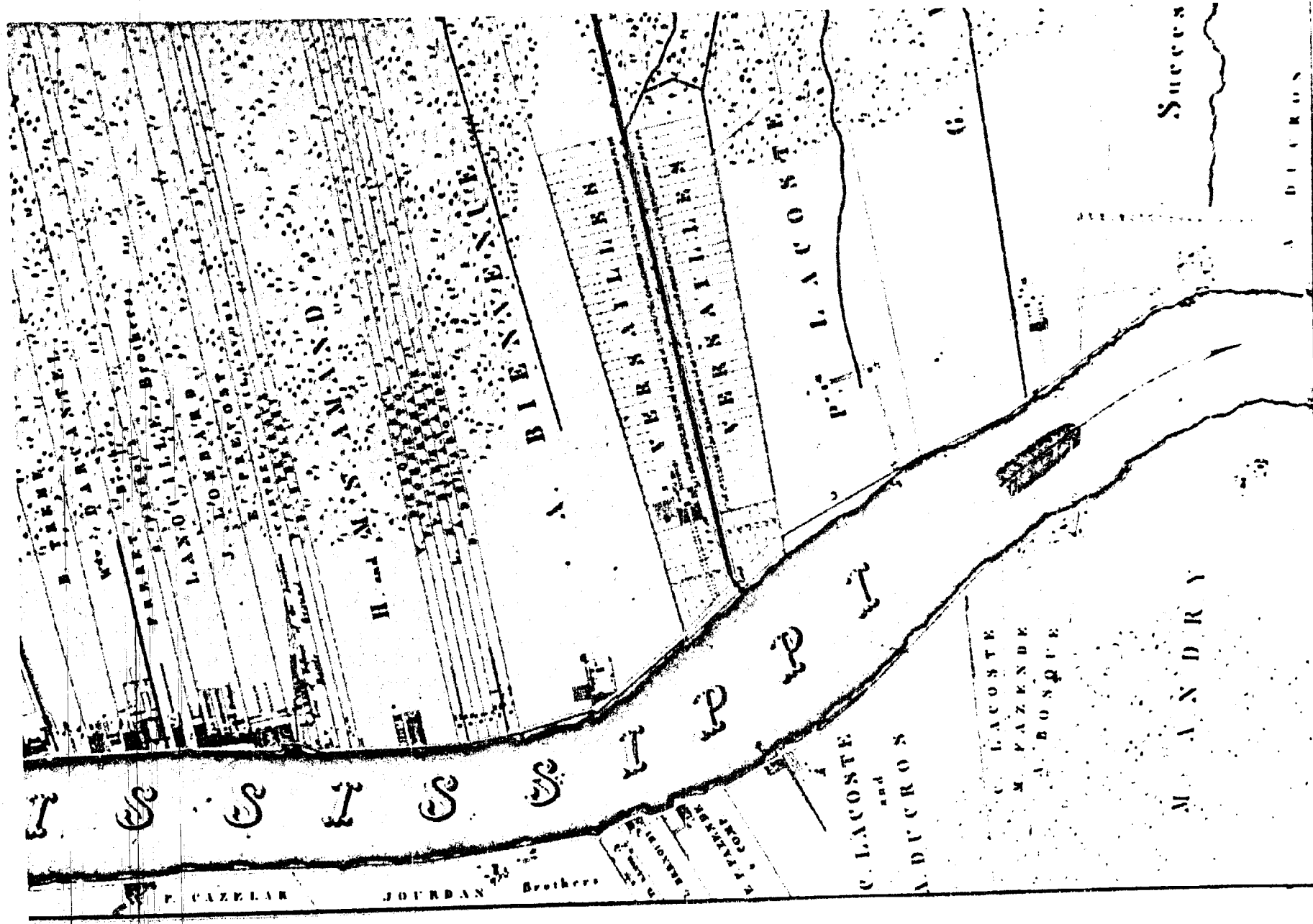
Course of the Mississippi River below New Orleans, about 1723, showing plantations. The river bends upward along the course of the 1814-15 battlefield. "Carte Particulier du Fleuve St. Louis...." Ca. 1723. Ayer Collection, Newberry Library, Chicago.



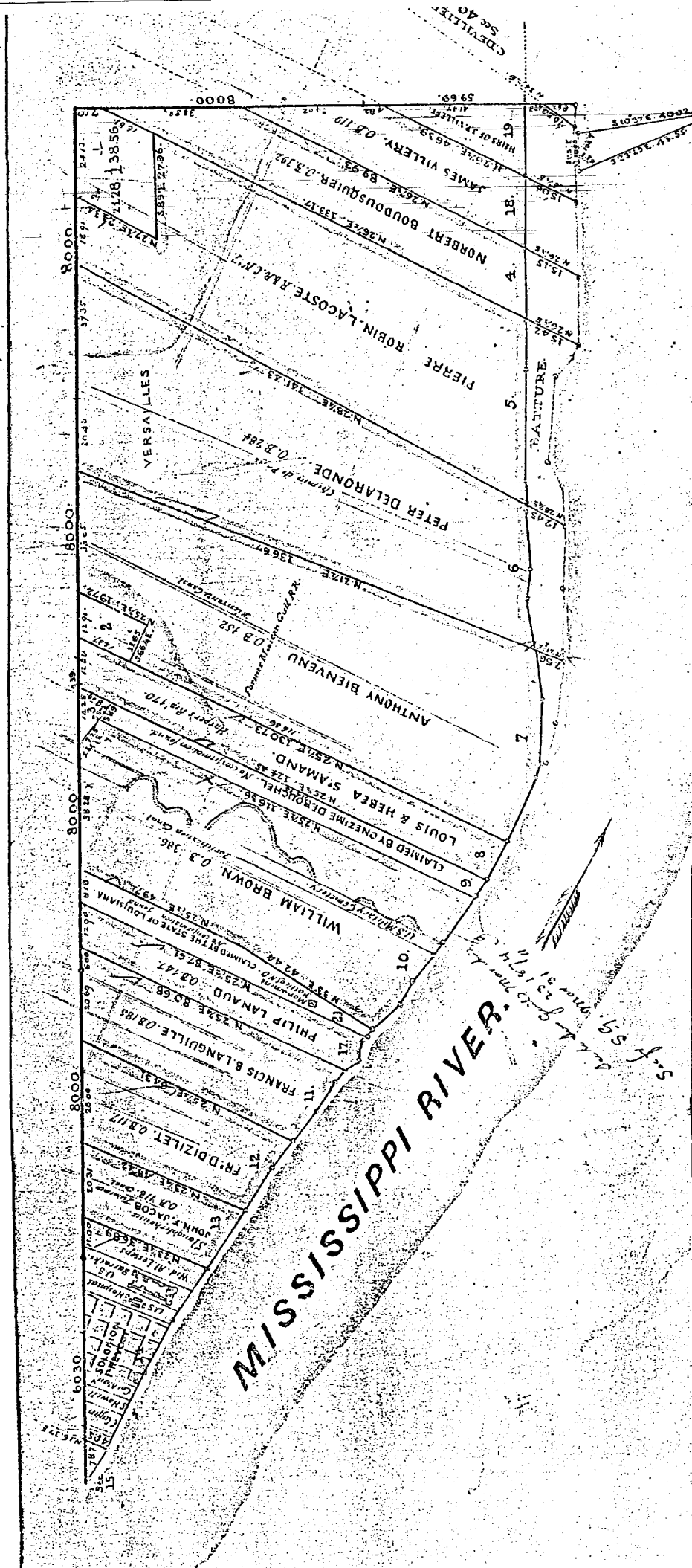
Point bar deposits (dashed) and meander shifts of the Mississippi River from New Orleans to English Turn in recent times; abandoned St. Bernard Delta distributary channel deposits (dotted). The river now curves downward at Chalmette. Detail from Snowden, Geology of Greater New Orleans, 1980.



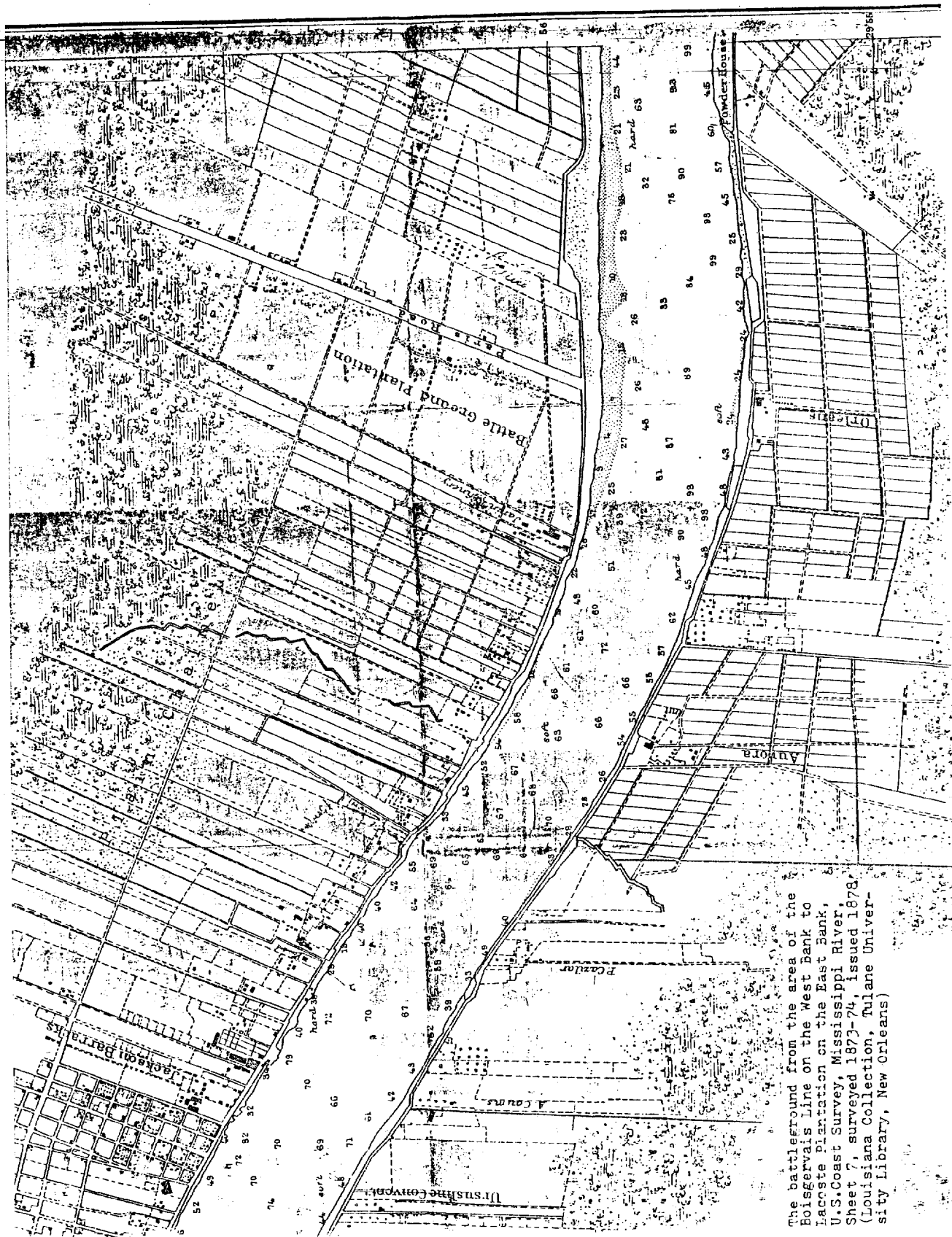
Growth of banklines from 1895 to 1940, 600 feet, at former Lacoste-de La Ronde property line. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New Orleans District, "Mississippi River, Lake Borgne Levee District," Sheet 3.



Area of the four battles of 1814-15 on the river below New Orleans. Charles F. Zimpel, "Topographical Map of New Orleans and Its Vicinity," March, 1834. Detail of inset.



Private land claims on the East Bank covering battle area of 1814-15, Surveyor General's Office, Cadastral Survey Plat, T.13S. R.12E., South Eastern District, Louisiana, 1873. Compiled from surveys of 1830, 1831, 1836, 1871 and 1872. Eastern States Office, Bureau of Land Management, Alexandria, Virginia.

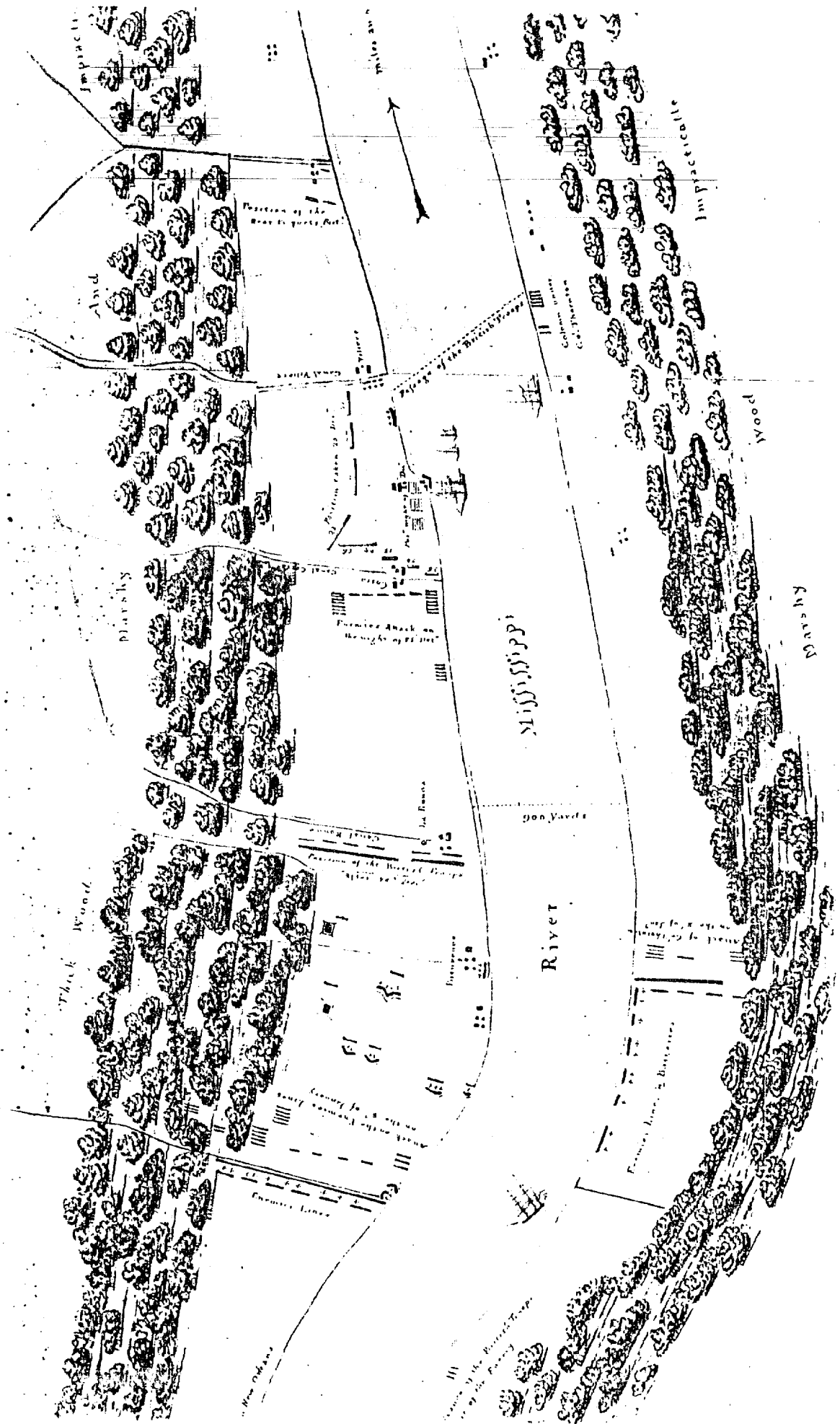


the battleground from the area of the Boisgervais line on the West Bank to Lacoste plantation on the East Bank, U.S. Coast Survey, Mississippi River, Sheet 7, surveyed 1873-74, issued 1878, (Louisiana Collection, Tulane University Library, New Orleans)

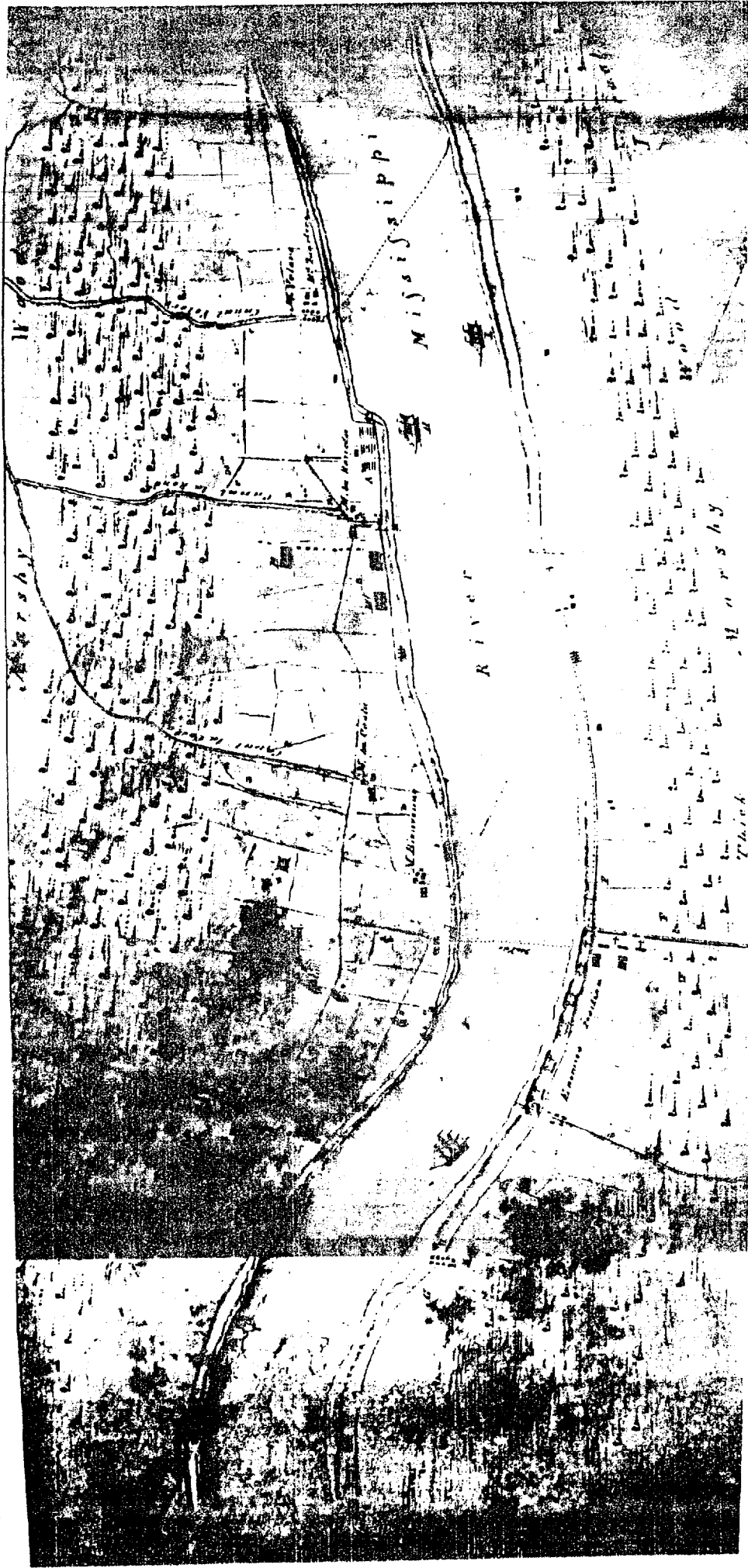
THE MILITARY TOPOGRAPHY AND SITES
ASSOCIATED WITH THE FOUR BATTLES
OF 1814-15 ON THE MISSISSIPPI
RIVER BELOW NEW ORLEANS

"I have it much at heart to give them (the Americans)
a complete drubbing before peace is made, when I
trust their northern limits will be circumscribed and
the command of the Mississippi wrested from them."

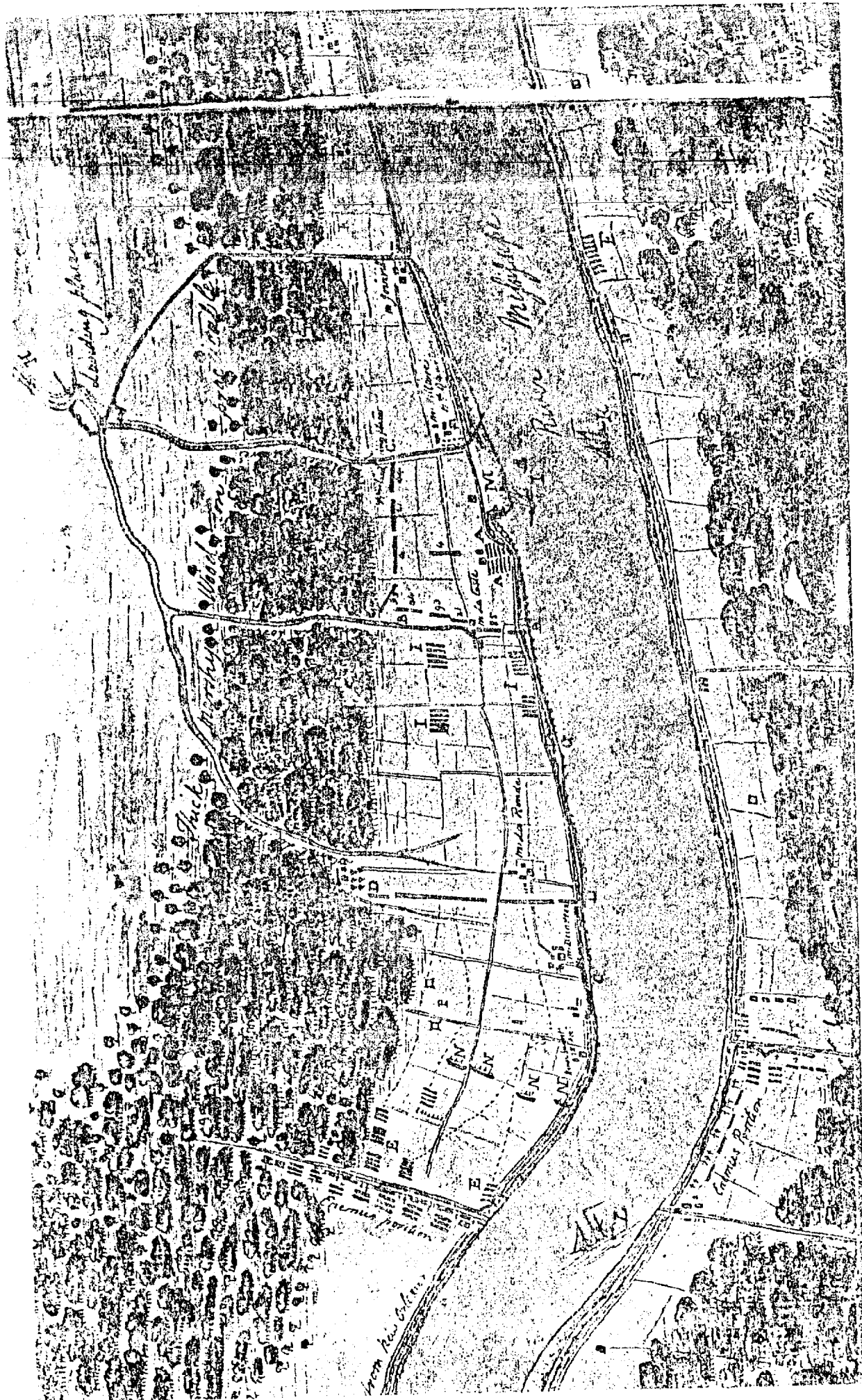
Letter of Admiral Sir Alexander
Cochrane to Secretary of War
Lord Bathurst regarding the
Southern expedition, July 14,
1814. (British Archives, London)



James Ewart, "Positions on the field of battle from December 23rd to January 8th," detail of drawing in his 1814-15 journal (published 1970).

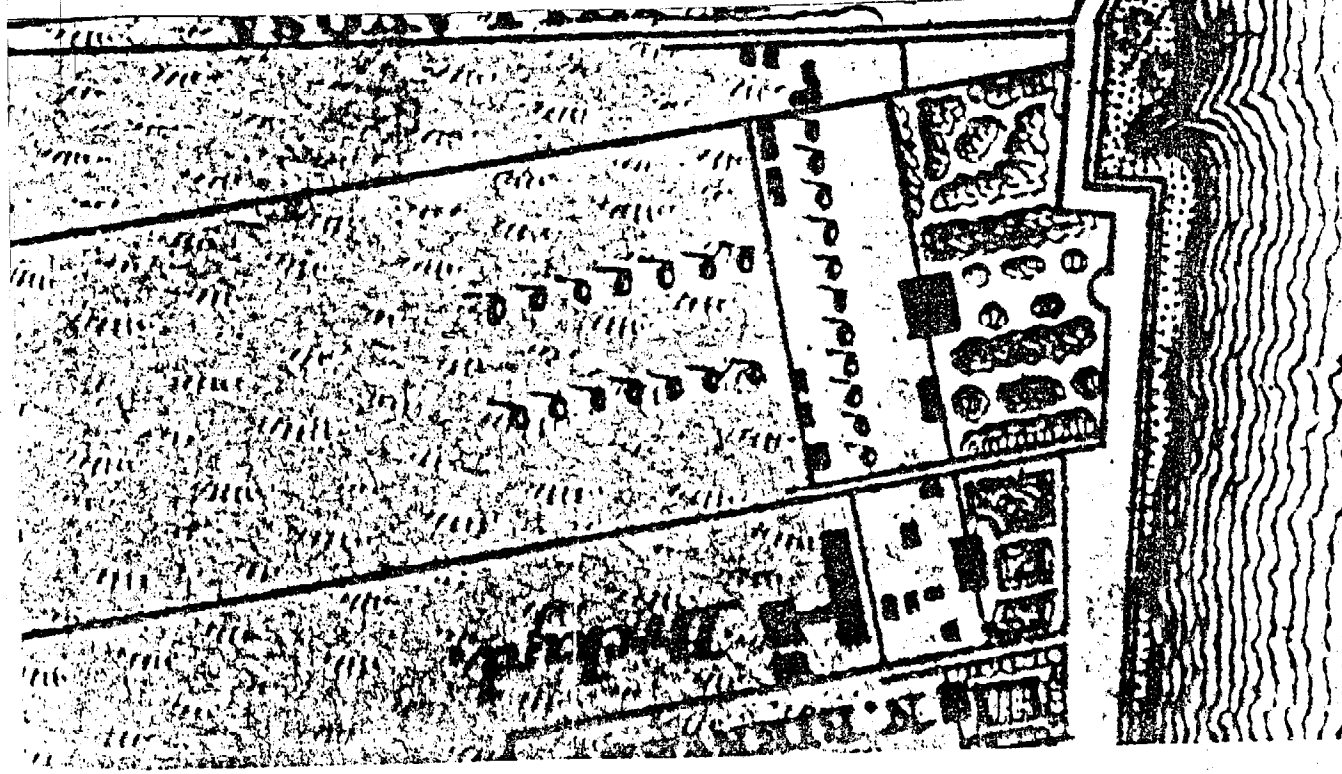


British sketch map showing entire field of battle. Draftsman and source unidentified, photographic copy in archives of Chalmette National Historical Park.

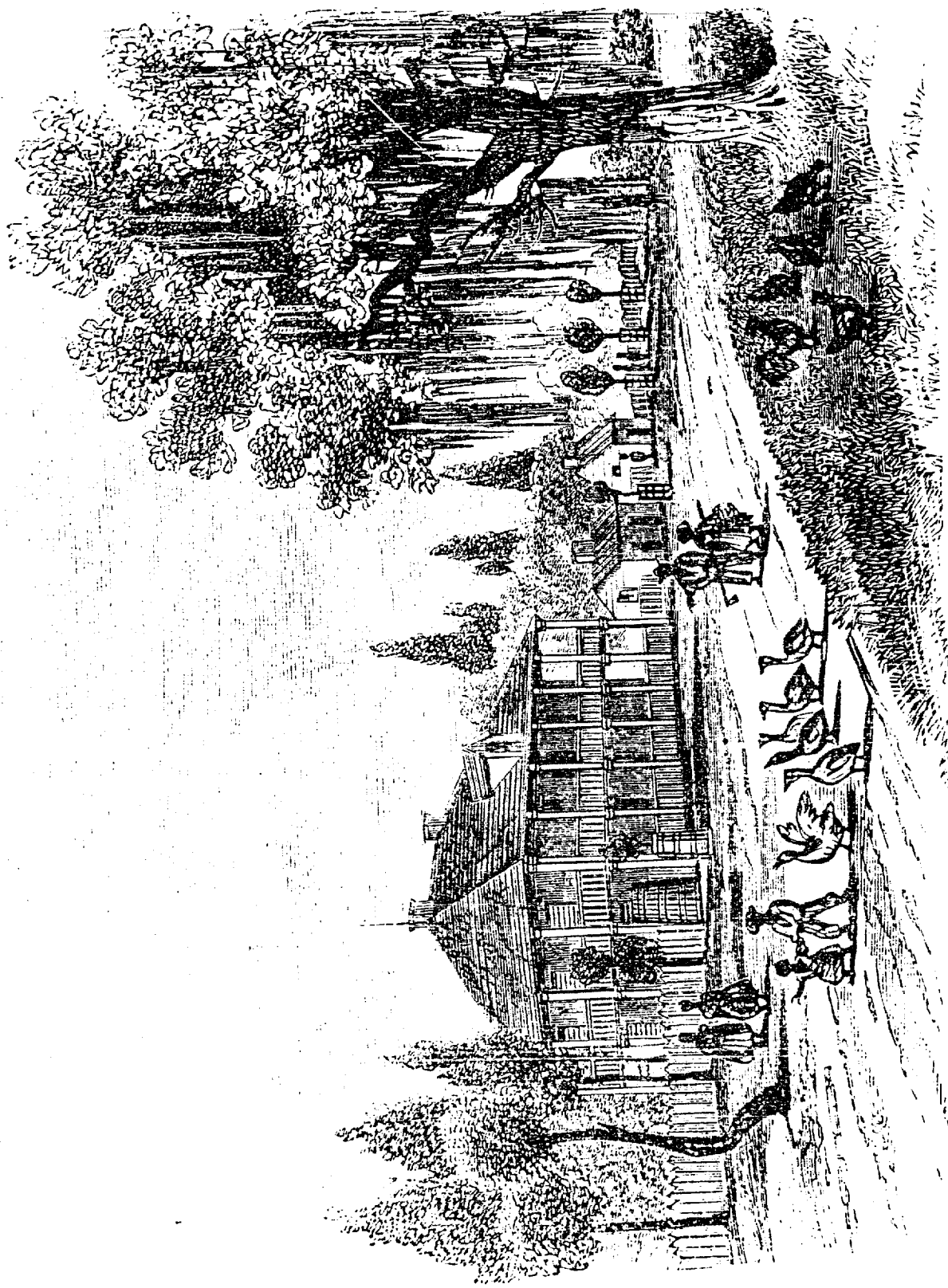


Colonel Alexander Dickson, "Sketch of the Position of the British and American Forces during the Operations against New Orleans from the 23rd Dec'r, 1814, to 8th Jan'y 1815." Detail. (Royal Artillery Institute, London)

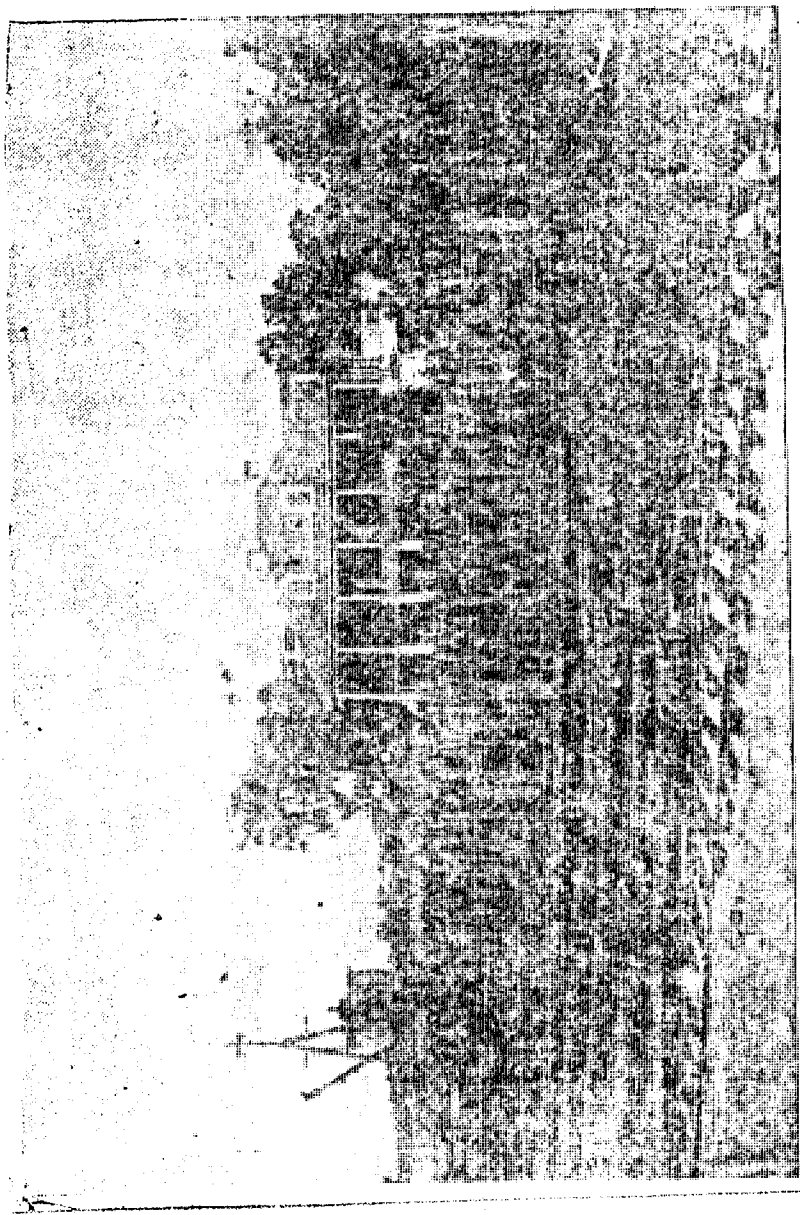
THE AMERICAN CAMP



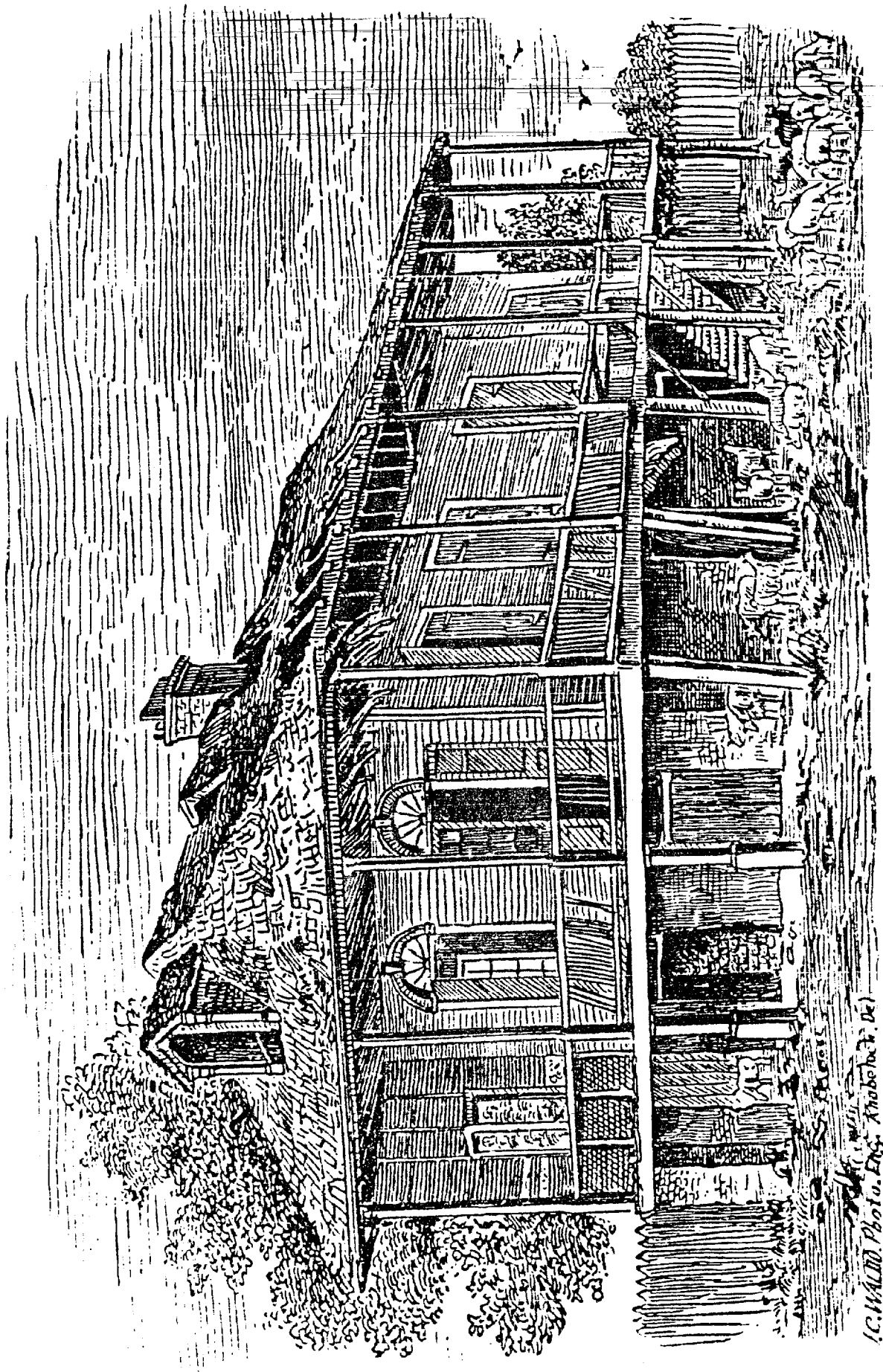
The Languille, Lombard (formerly Macarty) and Prevost (formerly Rodriguez) properties on Zimpel's 1834 map of New Orleans and vicinity. The "Rodriguez Canal" is at the far right.



"Jackson's Headquarters," the Macarty Plantation House, engraving after sketch of April 1861, Benson J. Lossing. The Pictorial Field Book of the War of 1812, 1868.



The Macarty House (Jackson's Headquarters), with construction of Chalmette Slip docks in foreground. Undated newspaper clipping of about 1907, just before demolition of house. Louisiana Collection, Tulane University Library.



Rodriguez Plantation House, Curtis J. Waldo, Illustrated Visitor's Guide to New Orleans, 1879.

RODRIGUEZ PLANTATION PRIOR TO THE BATTLE OF NEW
ORLEANS, AS INDICATED BY ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND
HISTORICAL INVESTIGATIONS

Established by archaeology: 
Projected by historical
research: 

Macarty Plantation
property line

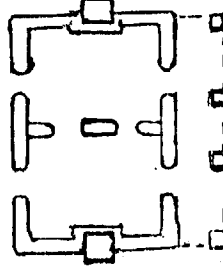
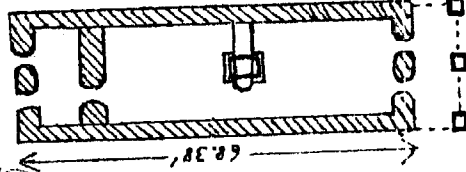
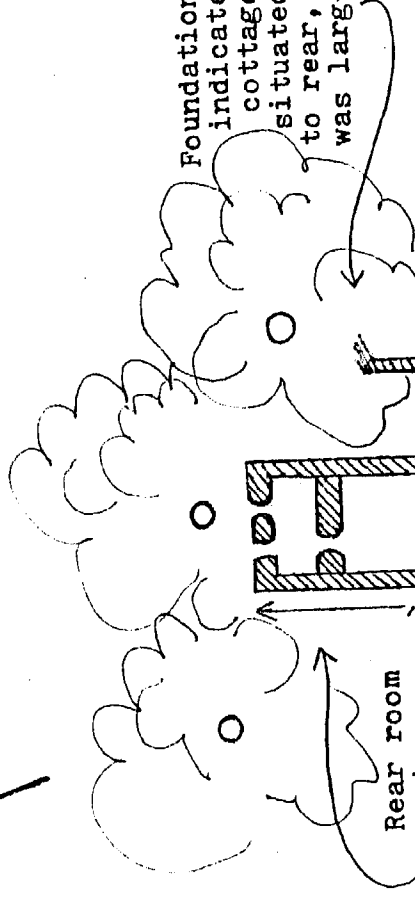
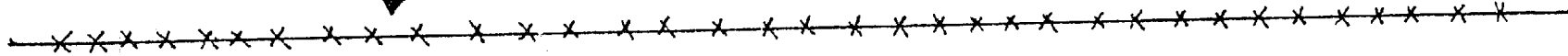
Outbuildings

Canal

Foundations may
indicate
cottage was
situated more
to rear, or
was larger

Rear room
perhaps
post-battle

Houses

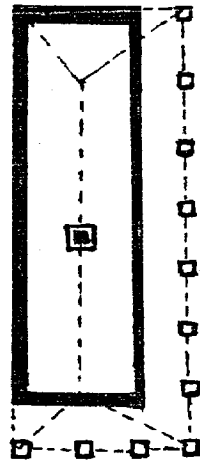


68.38'

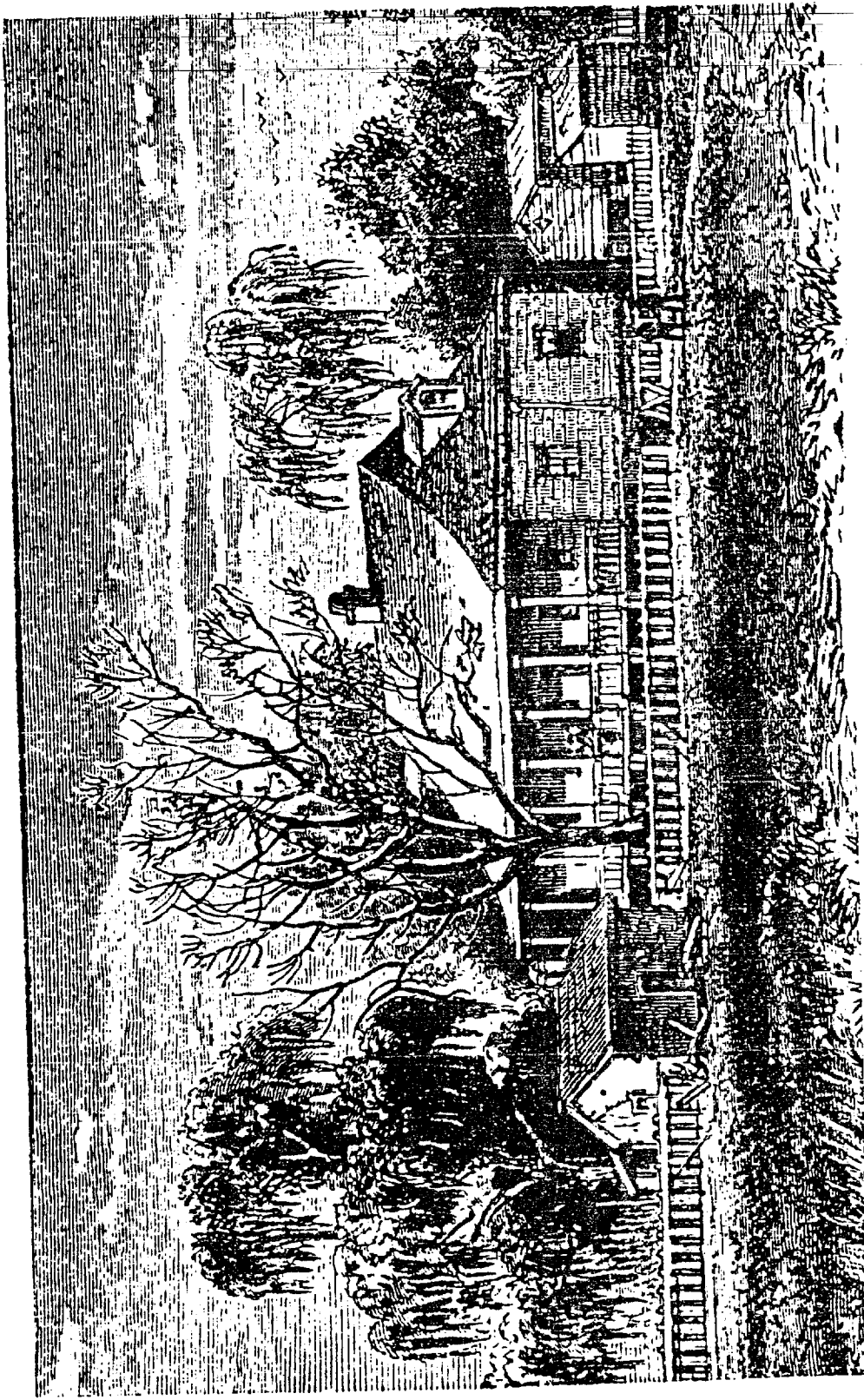
RODRIGUEZ PLANTATION PRINCIPAL DWELLING HOUSE
PROJECTED ROOF PLANS BASED ON
HISTORIC VISUAL SOURCES



Battle period



Post-battle period



Jackson's Headquarters

A 20th century identification of the Rodriguez Plantation House as "Jackson's Headquarters," in a children's text book, William O. Scroggs, The Story of Louisiana, 1924. Reproduced from George Washington Cable, Creoles of Louisiana, 1884.

The American Camp was established on the "Rodriguez Canal," within the present-day Chalmette National Historical Park, on December 23, 1814, the day the British arrived on the bank of the Mississippi River. That afternoon, the canal was chosen as the place of rendezvous for American troops gathering for the night attack on the British. After the night battle, the Americans retreated to the canal in the early morning hours of December 24th. During that day, they began to build a breastwork on the upper side of the canal which became the American line of defense.

In the days that followed, the American Camp grew upriver from the canal and defense line until it extended into the City of New Orleans. Troops were also camped on Gentilly Ridge and other outlying sites, and across the river, but the most heavily populated encampment was that nearest Jackson's line at the "Rodriguez Canal." Thousands of troops, Negro slaves, civilian visitors from the city, and horses were concentrated on the plantations lying upriver within a mile of the canal: Rodriguez, Macarty, Languille, Delery, Piernas and Prevost.

The soldiers pitched tents in fields of sugar cane stubble. The slaves were employed in building the fortification at the canal, and they acted as servants to the officers and soldiers. The horses of the dismounted troops were allowed to run at pasture in the plantation fields back from the river, while the mounted units were stationed with their horses in the gardens of the plantation houses fronting the river.

~~Picket guards were stationed along the swamp wood line~~
and along

THE PIERNAS CANAL

Traces of this canal are the only significant surviving surface feature associated with the area of the American encampment. They are located near Aycock Street north of the St. Bernard Highway. The Piernas Canal was also called the "Fishermen's Canal" as it was a route favored by fishermen for bringing their catch from Lake Borgne via Bayou Bienvenu. General Andrew Jackson was concerned that the British might use this canal to gain access to the rear of his defense line. He therefore placed guard outposts on the canal, and occasionally sent scouting parties out the canal to Bayou Bienvenu to reconnoitre the movements of the British.

According to Latour (p.138-141, p.144) Jackson sent Major Davis, assistant inspector-general, and two hundred of Coffee's men to the confluence of the bayou and canal on the night of January 3rd, in a heavy rain and with mud up to their knees, to investigate a false rumor of a British landing there. Soon thereafter, Jackson ordered Colonel Reuben Kemper of Captain Jedediah Smith's Feliciana Troop of Horse, to select volunteers and proceed in boats up the Piernas Canal to Bayou Bienvenu and hence to its junction with Bayou Mazant where the British had built a breastwork. Kemper and his men fled through the marshes when they were observed by the British and returned to Jackson with their reconnoitring information.

On or about January 5th, Jackson established a cavalry post, consisting of a detachment of Captain Ogden's Company of Dragoons, at the confluence of the Piernas Canal and Bayou Bienvenu.

Although the British knew about the Piernas Canal as an access route to the river, they apparently made no attempts to reach it. Due to a low level of water in Bayou Bienvenu, their transport boats could only travel up the bayou as far as the Villere Canal, four miles downriver. The Piernas Canal did not see military action but has historic significance as a route of military movements in 1814-15.

Most of the area occupied by the American Camp has been urbanized and industrialized, but archaeological resources may survive in some locations. Large, relatively undisturbed areas near the American line may contain artifacts of the battle and the encampment. These areas are a brushy wooded area north of the Chalmette Slip and immediately upriver from the Park property, and a pasture north of this from the St. Bernard Highway and upriver from the houses lining Pirate Street. The latter area once served as an early airport, but has long pastured cows. In 1814-15, it was the morass in which General Coffee's Tennessee troops camped at their posts behind that portion of the defense work that extended into the swamp. Within the National Park property, construction of the roadway to the obelisk has altered much

of the ground level immediately behind the American line.

There are no structural remains associated with the American Camp above Jackson's line. The officers and soldiers made use of the numerous plantation buildings along the river. They caused much damage to the houses, outbuildings and fences. Some of the plantation houses survived well into the 20th century, but all are now gone.

The Languille Plantation served as General Carroll's Headquarters, and is said to have also furnished the quarters for the hospital.¹ The Macarty House served as Jackson's Headquarters. This important building, and fine example of Louisiana plantation architecture, was demolished when the Chalmette Slip was constructed in 1907. It stood on the downriver bank of the slip until torn down. Of possible archaeological interest is the

DRAINAGE DITCH ALONG THE
DOWNRIVER BOUNDARY OF THE
MACARTY PLANTATION

This ditch lies just above the National Park property fence line. The plantation ditches on the battlefield are possible depositories of battle artifacts and this ditch

1. United States Senate, "Report of the Commissioners appointed to examine and assess the damages occasioned by the troops of the United States in the neighborhood of the city of New Orleans." February 17, 1820. Account No. 3.

passed through the American camp not far from the breastworks. It may have received refuse from the camp. It runs from the River Road to the railroad tracks. In 1814-15, the ditch near the river road was bordered on the up-river side by a hedge of orange trees which was part of Macarty's ornamental garden.

THE RODRIGUEZ PLANTATION

The wedge-shaped portion of the Chalmette Park property between the "Rodriguez Canal" and the upper park fence line was, in 1814-15, the river front portion of the plantation of Juan (or Jean) Rodriguez. In 1983-84, National Park Service archaeologist Ted Birkedal partially excavated the foundations of

THE RODRIGUEZ HOUSES AND OUTBUILDINGS

The outbuildings were destroyed, probably by the American troops as a source of lumber for the construction of the defense work and batteries.² The two Rodriguez houses served as American Headquarters, or tactical headquarters at the line of battle. Along with the Macarty House, which was Jackson's Headquarters, the Rodriguez houses were the most important buildings associated with the American Camp and with the American line of defense.

The principal Rodriguez dwelling was often confused with the Macarty House as "Jackson's Headquarters" in the years following the battle. It was often identified as such during

2. Ibid., Account No. 1.

the 19th century. The Macarty House was Jackson's staff and sleeping quarters, while the Rodriguez houses served as battle headquarters or general military headquarters at the breastworks. When the property was purchased as a memorial, the principal Rodriguez house was allowed to stand as a ruin near the unfinished obelisk until the early 20th century when confusion in the identification of "Jackson's Headquarters" ultimately resulted in the singling out of the Macarty House as the sole American headquarters building.

Jean Rodriguez, who was a prominent attorney elected to the New Orleans City Council and who made a practice of publishing political treatises, described the military use of his houses in one of his books:

During the war, my house became the national house, a military post, the headquarters from the moment of the arrival of the English until their retreat, and for many days thereafter, it was in possession of our army, it was the camp Jackson, the headquarters established at the line. Two very well furnished houses and a well filled wine cellar were seized and put to the use of the army; without this help, our brave defenders would have suffered much; and me, proprietor, without serving to provide me a cloth, the covering of my home, I slept in the city which became my post, on the floor with a borrowed mattress, having let go six beds, well mounted in my home.

I abandoned all use of the camp for the common defense, in order to save all the properties of the State, and for the national glory and honor; my furnishings, my carriages, my horses, my farm animals, my library, all are dispersed, and most of all these things passed into certain houses of the city.

At the same time, me, without lodging, without hearth, without a plate for my service; me a few days before in opulence; I roamed almost like a misfortunate beggar, from table to table, at a time when it was believed that all was lost and that the city would be destroyed, having closed the door and the heart to kindness as well as indigence: nevertheless, at the same time that the military government seized all I had, and that armed like the others, I spent the day at the camp, and the night in service in town, without occupying myself to provide for my subsistence nor that of my family....³

(translated from the French)

On March 14, 1820, the United States Senate enacted a "Bill for the relief of John Rodriguez" for the sum of \$1,857.00 for the damages he sustained, rather than the \$5,829.00 listed in his claim. As with other property owners on the battlefield, his full claim was disallowed since the American government only paid for damages committed by the American Army. Like some other property owners, Rodriguez attempted to show that his losses were due to use of his property by the American Army, whether or not damages were actually caused by the hands of the Americans or the cannon balls of the British. Congressional Representative Edward Livingston, who had been an aide to General Jackson at New Orleans, appealed Rodriguez' claim, but the remainder was unpaid at Rodriguez' death in 1834.

3. J. Rodriguez, Defense Fulminante contre La Violation des Droits du Peuple, Nouvelle-Orleans, 1827, p. 55-56.

Research has yet to document the date of construction or the builders of the two Rodriguez Houses, one a raised galleried house, and the other a galleried Creole cottage. The cottage may have dated from the 18th century and may have been constructed in association with the canal, but the principal raised house was described by Rodriguez as of "American construction" in an advertisement for sale of the plantation in the Louisiana Courier of May 3, 1813. This appears to mean that the raised house was built after the Louisiana Purchase of 1803. Also on the property at that time were "kitchens with ovens, chicken house, Negro cabins, latrines, wells, stables and good coach-house for two vehicles."

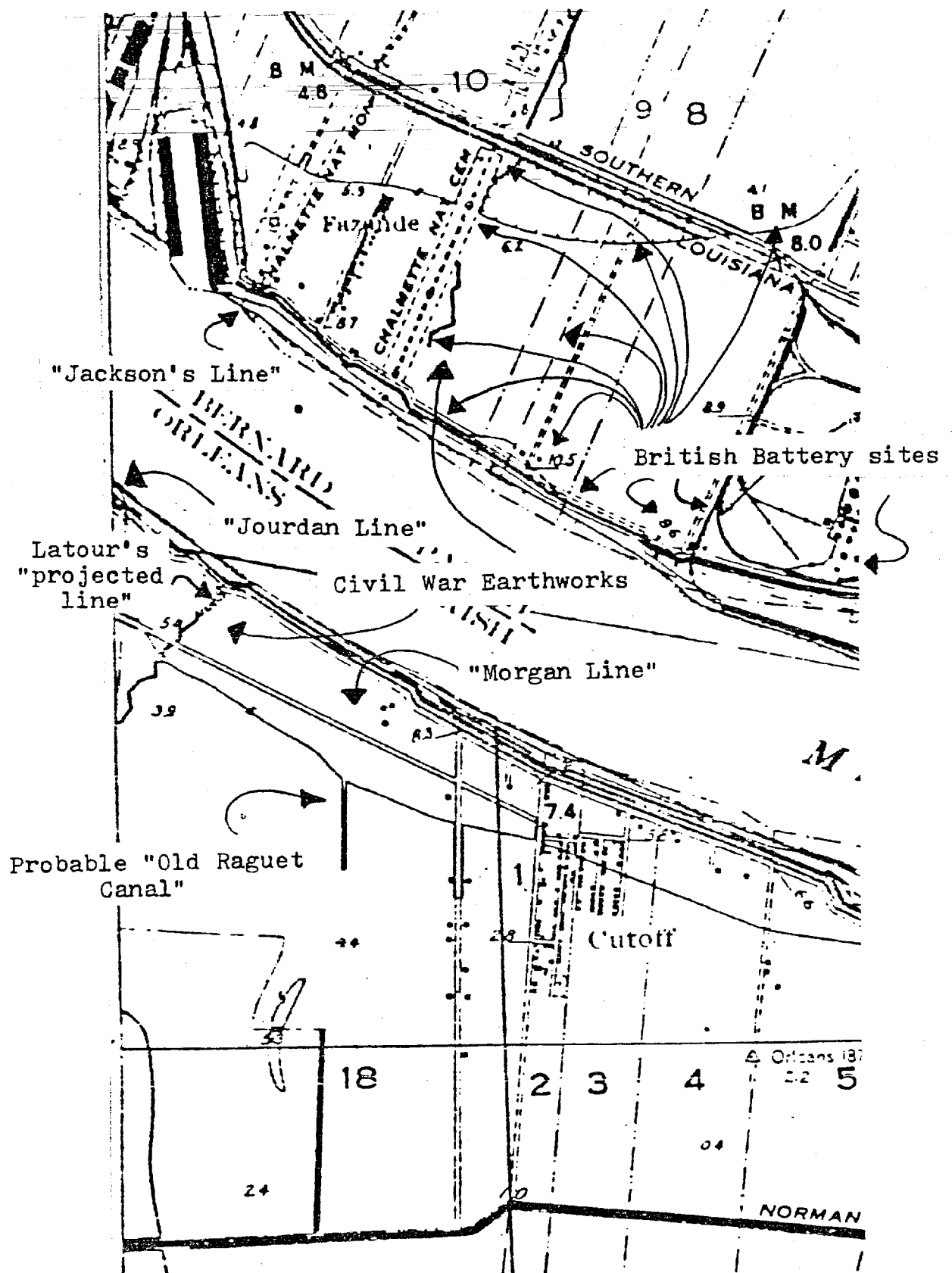
The only post-1803 owner besides Rodriguez who owned the land long enough to erect the house was Nicholas Roche, who seems to have been operating the sawmill on the canal. However, it is possible that the principal house was erected by Rodriguez after he acquired the property in 1808.

The foundations and site of the Rodriguez houses have historical significance because of their important military use during the British Invasion. (For additional information see Birkedal's report; Jake Ivey, National Park Service archaeologist on the Rodriguez outbuilding foundations; Swanson, "Annotated Archival Sources Listing Relevant to the Archaeological, Architectural and Historical Interpretation of the Rodriguez Plantation Buildings....")

THE RODRIGUEZ OAK TREES

which shadow the Rodriguez House sites may have witnessed the Battle of New Orleans. Compared to the size of known plantings, the larger of the trees, especially, may have been small oaks at the time of the battle. They may have been among those shown near the houses in battle-period sketches (Laclotte and Latrobe).

THE BATTLEGROUND OF DECEMBER 28, 1814,
JANUARY 1, AND JANUARY 8, 1815

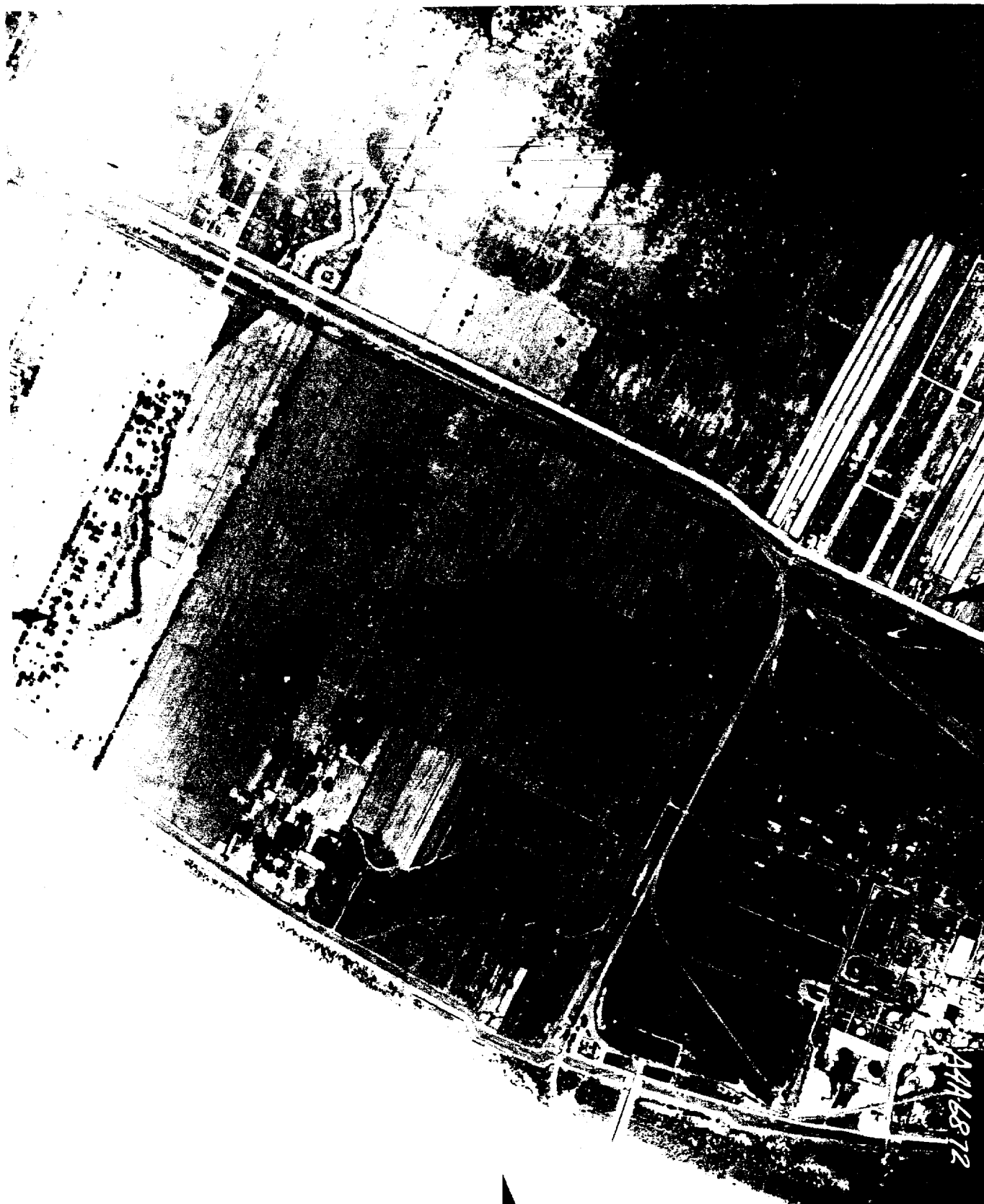


U.S.G.S. Chalmette Quad-
rangle, 1937. Enlarged
detail.



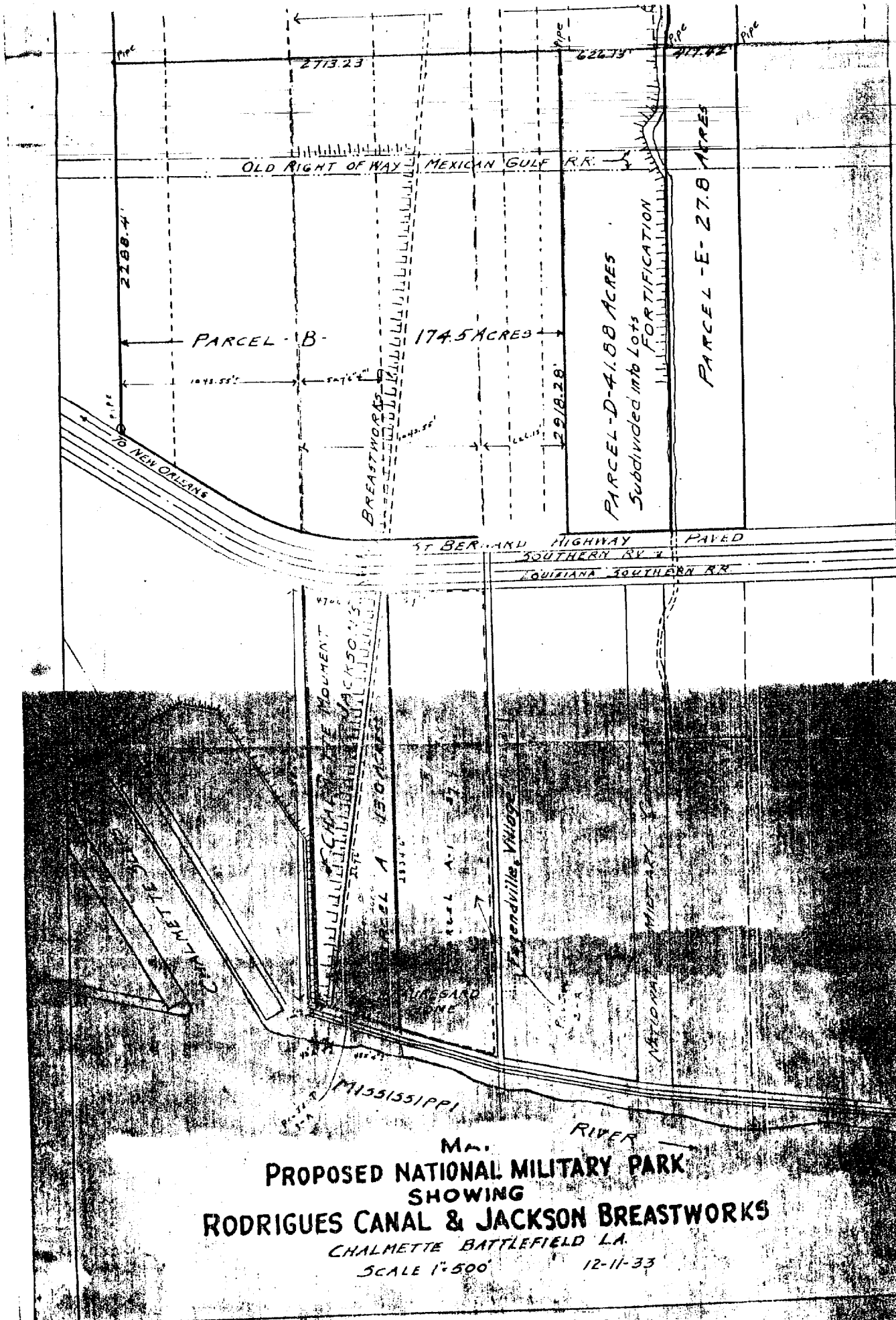
Languille, Macarty, Rodriguez,
Chalmet, and Bienvenu Plantations.

Sept. 5, 1933. 1:20,000.
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.



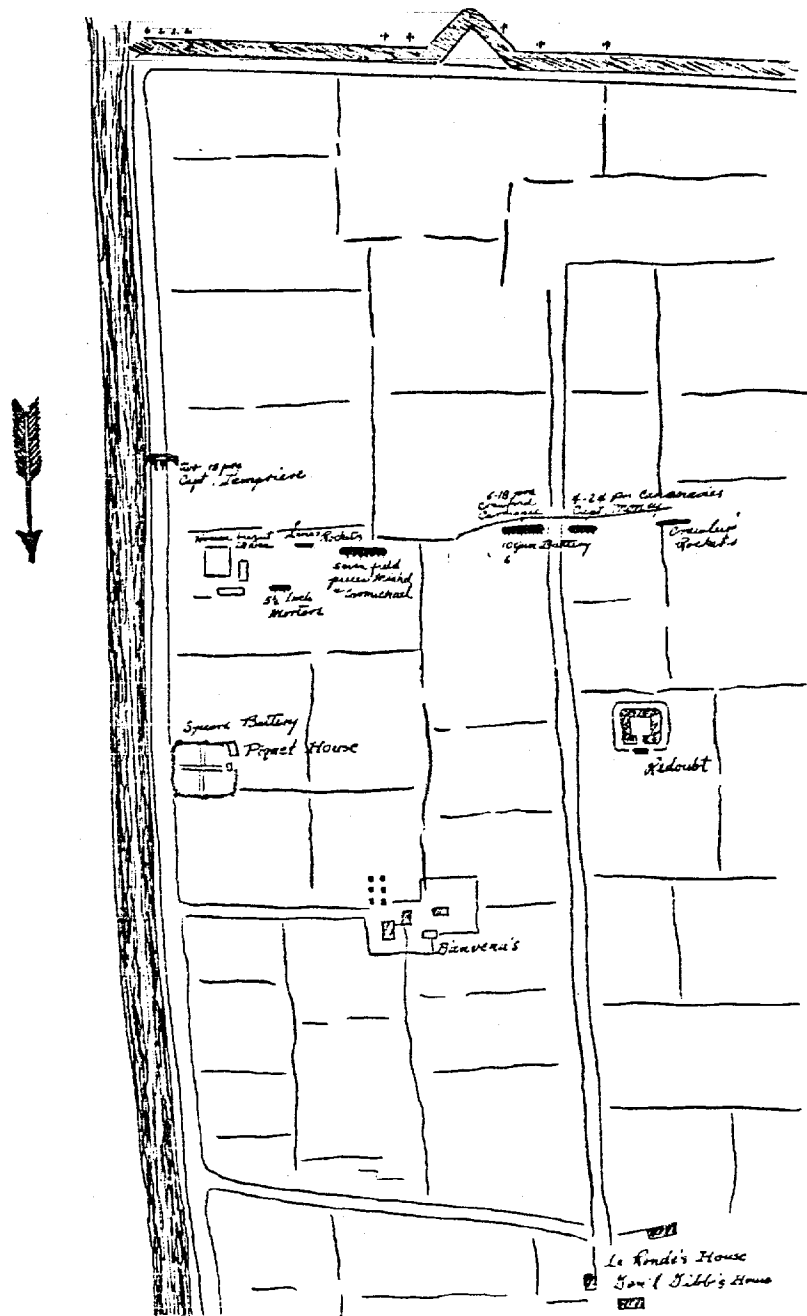
Chalmet, Bienvenu, and de La Ronde
Plantations.

Sept. 5, 1933. 1:20,000.
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.





Site of Rodriguez Canal and Jackson's
line north of St. Bernard Highway from
Chalmette National Park. Weeds hide
a depression that survives of the
canal. Looking n.e.
Photo: B. Swanson, 3/1985.



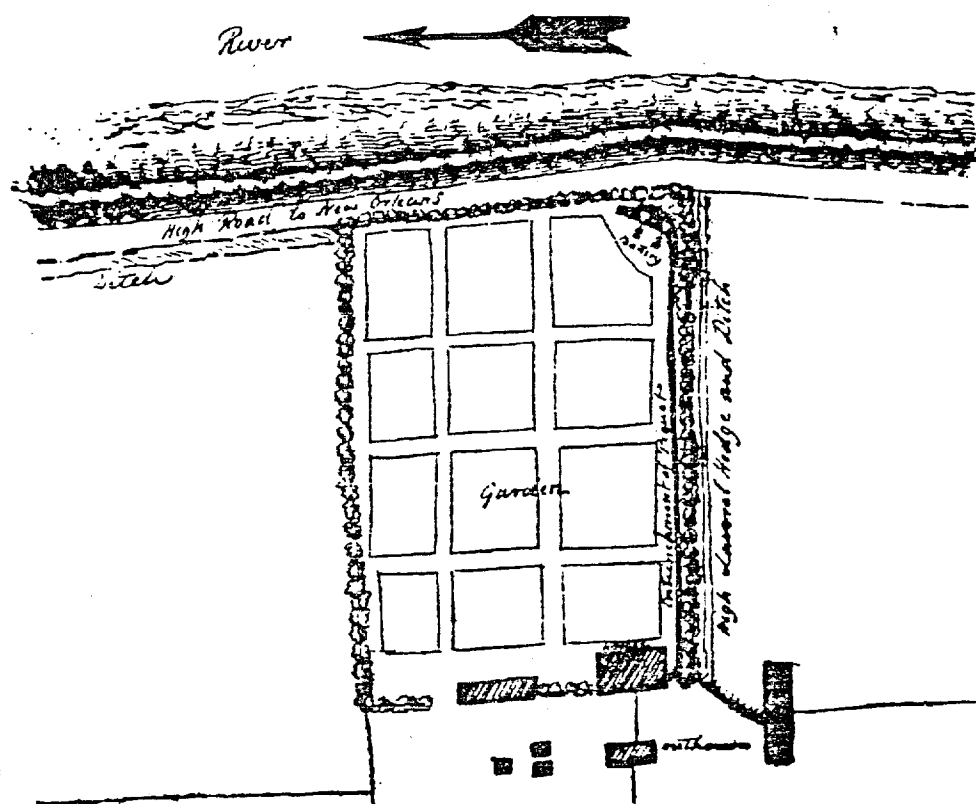
Dickson's journal sketch of the battlefield from the American line to the de La Ronde House, showing batteries to be installed for the artillery battle of January 1st. Capt. Lempriere's River Road battery may have been erected in a rear position. (Royal Artillery Institute, London)



Possible British rocket battery site.
Near section 40 in Chalmette National
Military Cemetery. Looking n.e.
Photo: B.Swanson, 3/1985.



Possible British rocket battery site,
at entrance to Chalmette National
Military Cemetery, looking s.e.
Photo: B.Swanson, 3/1985.



Dickson's journal sketch of the ship battery and "entrenchment of picquet" in the garden of the lower Chalmet Plantation House. (Royal Artillery Institute, London)

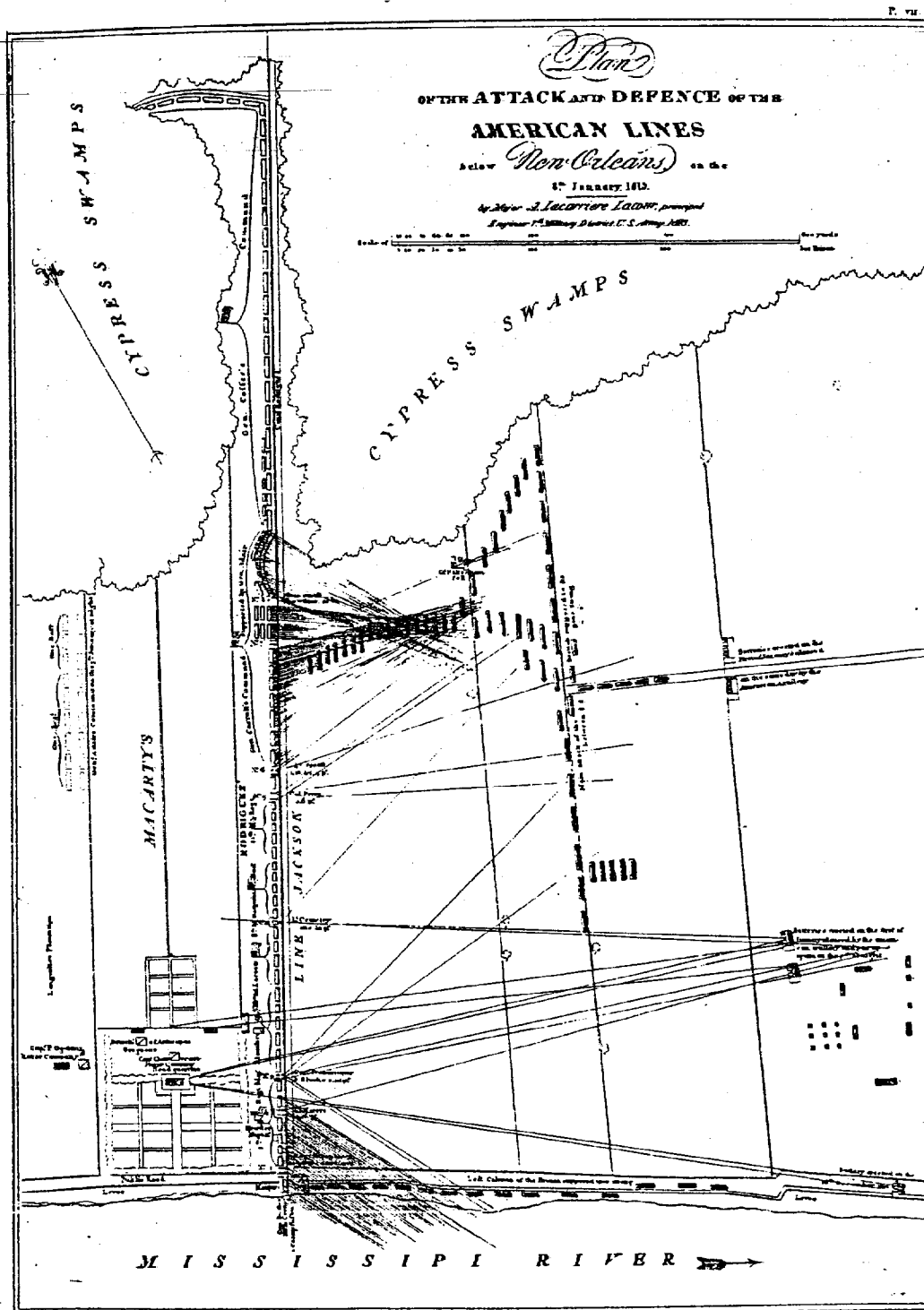


Sites of the Bienvenu house (right)
and lower Chalmet house (left).
Trees define route of old road.

4/20/43.



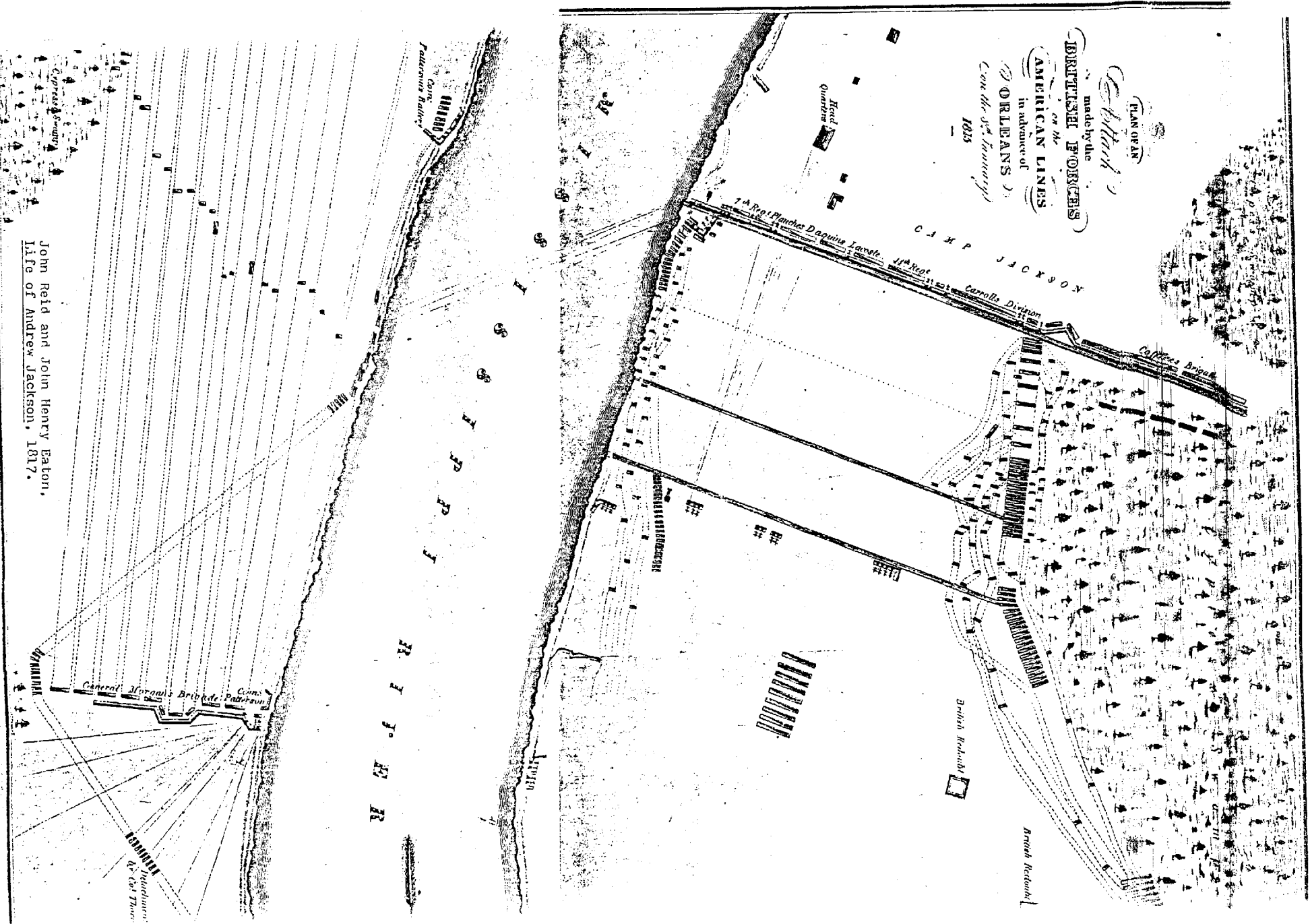
Jean Hyacinthe Laclotte, "The Battle of New Orleans," "Key of the Print," 1815.
Louisiana Collection, Tulane University Library.



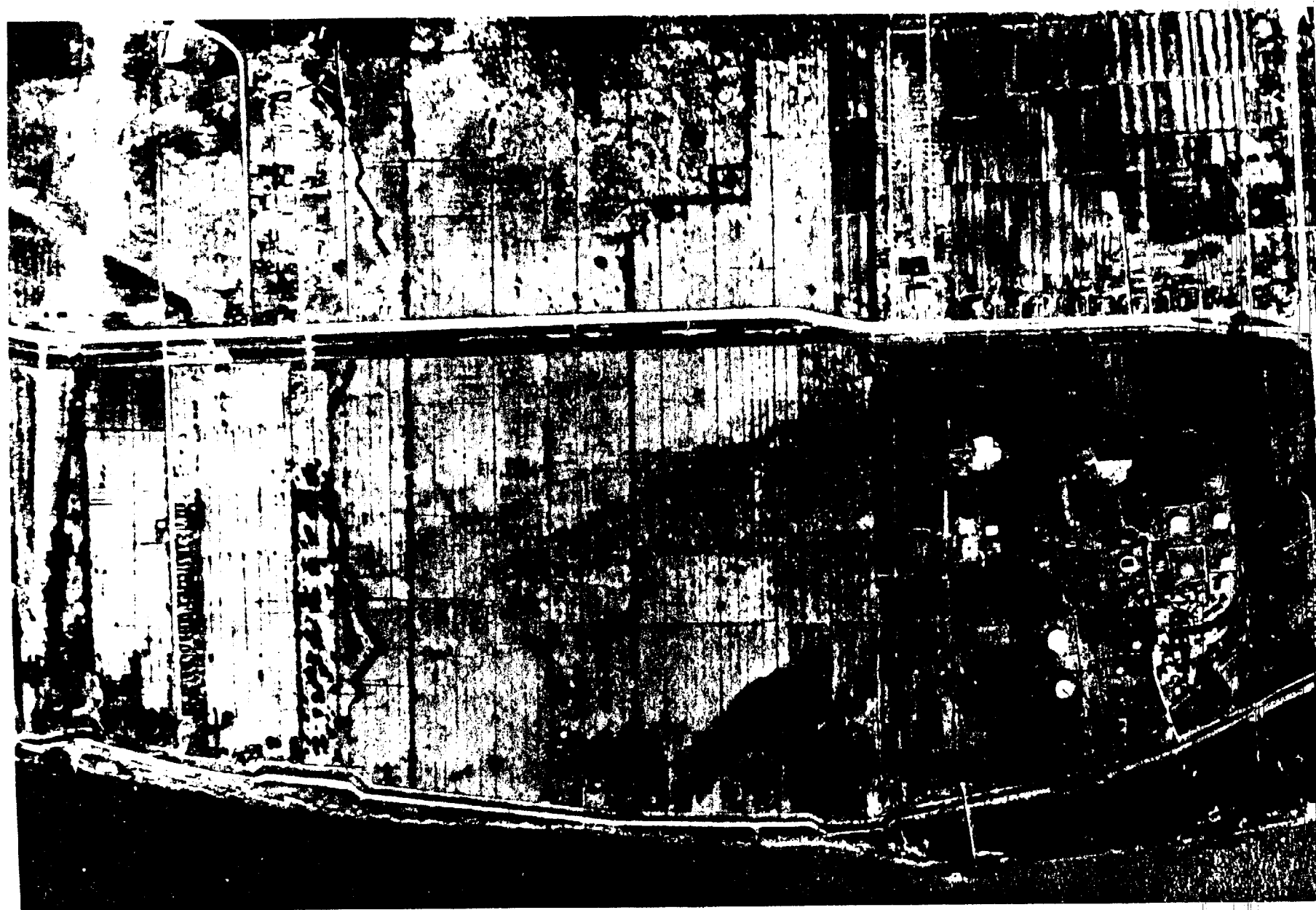
Plan of the attack and defense of the American lines below New Orleans on the 8th of January, 1815.

By Major A. Lacarriere Latour, Principal Engineer.
7th Military District, 1815.

PLAN OF
De Biltz
 made by the
BRITISH FORCES
 OR THE
AMERICAN LINES
 in advance of
NEW ORLEANS
 on the 27th January
 1815

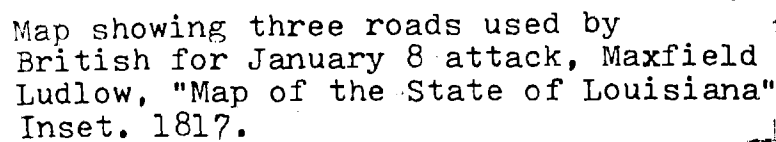


John Reid and John Henry Eaton,
 Lieut of Andrew Jackson, 1817.



Rodriguez, Chalmet, Bienvenu, and de
La Ronde Plantations. Note old levee
lines. 11/2/50.

GEN. JACKSON
1816



The most intense military activity of the British invasion of Louisiana took place along a mile of the East Bank of the Mississippi River where the British advanced in force three times, on December 28th, January 1st and January 8th. This battleground occupied the Macarty, Rodriguez, Chalmet, and Bienvenue Plantation. The heaviest fighting took place on the Rodriguez and Chalmet Plantations; the heaviest British casualties occurred on the upper part of the Chalmet Plantation, near the American line at the Rodriguez Canal. Battle actions extended nearly a mile back from the river and into the swamp. On January 1st and January 8th, the battleground also included the opposite side of the river.

THE AMERICAN LINE OF DEFENSE

Jackson's earthworks were erected on the lower boundary line of the Rodriguez Plantation, on the upriver side of the

"RODRIGUEZ CANAL"

This old sawmill canal was misnamed at the time of the Battle of New Orleans. It did not belong to the Rodriguez property, but rather to the downriver Chalmet property. When Nicholas Roche sold the half-arpent-frontage property to Jean Baptiste Drouillard on December 21, 1805, before notary Pierre Pedesclaux, the act specified that the mill and its canal would remain in Roche's ownership and the act indicated that the mill was still in operation. Since the size and shape of the half-arpent property given in this act ("opening at an angle for 15 arpents until it reaches the property width of $2\frac{1}{2}$ arpents, and then running in parallel

lines to a depth of 80 arpents") is the same shape and size maintained through the 19th century, it is apparent that the mill and the canal did not belong to the later Rodriguez Plantation.

On the same day, December 21, 1805, Roche sold the downriver parcel with the canal to Jean Baptiste Prevost, who, on March 21, 1808, before Pedesclaux, sold the parcel with "mill and implements" to William Brown. Chalmet acquired the mill property from Brown, as a part of his larger plantation, shortly before the Battle of New Orleans. Research has yet to document the date the canal was originally dug.

Latour says that the mill house straddling the canal was gone by the time of the battle and that the river end of the canal had silted-in. General Jackson ordered the river end excavated so that water might fill the canal. Contemporary descriptions of the canal vary from Latour's : "had long been abandoned, having no longer any mill to turn, so that its banks had fallen in and raised its bottom, which was covered with grass, presenting rather the appearance of an old draining ditch than of a canal" (p.145-146); to Tatum who described it as "large" (p.112); to Cooke who said it was "a common ditch, such as is often seen in low grounds...which might have been forded or crossed with planks" (p.187); to Reid who called it "deep" (p.324); and to General Lambert who said that British soldiers drowned in it (letter to Earl Bathurst, 5/13/1815).

*Reid - after
const. of
navigation*

Captain H. D. Jones, Royal Engineers, reported that "the section of the ditch for two thirds the distance from the river to the wood was eight feet deep and fifteen feet wide; from that to the left ten feet wide and four feet deep. The whole length of the ditch was filled with large brambles...." (3/30/1815).

Whatever the depth and breadth of the "Rodriguez Canal," it was sufficient to intimidate the British Army. The misconduct of Colonel Thomas Mullins in failing to bring forward the fascines and ladders to bridge the canal was given by the British as a reason for their defeat.

Birkedal's report describes the canal within the park boundaries. After leaving the park, the canal is visible as a shallow ditch between the park fence and the railroad tracks. North of the St. Bernard Highway, a trace of the canal continues as a shallow depression angling across an open pasture between the rear of an abandoned putt-putt course and the rear of the subdivision houses facing Pirate Street. Deep in the former swamp, somewhere north of this subdivision, the canal joined a natural bayou which was a tributary of Bayou Bienvenu.

The remnants of the "Rodriguez Canal," with adjoining earthworks, are the most significant landscape features associated with the American defense in 1814-15. They were the scene of the final decisive actions.

~~THE EARTHWORKS OF JACKSON'S LINE~~

have been largely reconstructed within the park property. A low, eroded portion of the breastwork in a wooded area near the north end of the park has not been reconstructed. No apparent surface remnants survive of the batteries on the line. Birkedal has located the position of Battery #3 near the river.

The only account of distances measured between the batteries on the line is given by Latour. In plotting the maps with with report, distances between the batteries have been taken from Latour's measurements computed in terms of the French toise. The scale on Latour's plans show toises to equal yards, when, in fact, they do not. A toise equals 6.394 feet, therefore Latour's "yard" would equal 3.197 feet.

Latour's Historical Memoir of the War in West Florida and Louisiana in 1814-15 was written in French and translated into English by H.P. Nugent, before being published in Philadelphia where the battle maps were engraved. It is apparent that allowances were not made, both in the maps and in the text, for recomputing French measurements into American measurements. Over the long distance of Jackson's line, the discrepancy makes a difference in the probable placements of the batteries.

Latour said that the length of Jackson's line was "eight hundred and fifteen toises, or about a mile, somewhat more than half of which ran from the river to the wood, the remainder extending into the depth, where the line took a direction towards the left, which rested on a cypress swamp

almost impassable." (p.147)

The length of 815 toises equals 5211.11 feet (a mile equals 5280 feet). Converted from toises, Latour's plan shows the earthwork from the river to the redan near the swamp to measure about 2900 feet. The plan is not topographically correct, nor in true scale, but this may be an approximately correct measurement.

In the text, Latour's distances between the batteries are given in yards. In toises, instead of yards, as converted to feet, the total distance is 2672.69 to the redan. Assuming that Latour's distances between the batteries do not include the size of the batteries, which probably averaged about 30 feet in width, a computation including batteries has been plotted on maps for this report. However, this is speculation, and the shorter distances, which may have been measured from the center of each battery, may be the more correct distances.

Both sets of measurements could serve as a guide for possible future archaeological investigations, using Birkedal's Battery #3 location as a known point of reference.

Latour's measurements between each battery:

Battery	
#1	(70 feet from river)
#2	287.73'
#3	+159.85'
#4	+703.34'
#5	+607.43'
#6	+115.09'
#7	+607.43'
#8	+191.82'
	<u>2672.69'</u> Total

Latour's measurements between each battery, adding
30 feet width for each battery:

Battery	
#1	(70 feet from river, plus 30 feet for battery)
#2	+317.73'
#3	+189.85'
#4	+733.34'
#5	+637.43'
#6	+145.09'
#7	+637.43'
#8	+221.82'
	<u>2912.69'</u> Total

When placing Latour's measurements on a modern map, about 150 feet of the breastwork appears to have been taken by the river, and the redan appears to fall approximately on the St. Bernard Highway. The redan was described by Latour as a "receding elbow," and he explained that "enormous holes in the soil made impassable by their being full of water from the canal, rendered this bend in the line unavoidable." (p.149) A U.S. Army Corps of Engineers aerial photograph-contour map shows a sudden depression of about one

~~foot on the north side of the St. Bernard Highway.~~

~~Where the breastwork entered the cypress swamp,~~
the work was described by Latour as being "not thicker than was necessary to resist musketry; it was formed of a double row of logs, laid one over the other, leaving a space of two feet, which was filled up with earth. Along one part of the line ran a banquette; in some parts, the height of the breastwork above the soil was hardly sufficient to cover the men. The earth thrown up to form the breastwork, had been dug out at various intervals, and without any order..." (p.147). Slight elevations and lumpiness of the ground surface along the course of the canal north of the highway could indicate a viable archaeological site.

About 1500 feet of Jackson's defense line passes under a residential subdivision. It crosses Pirate Street at an angle and ends approximately at Main Street, where the breastwork turned back at a right angle for about 800 feet. At the location of this bend the contour map shows that the ground under the houses rises six inches in an oval area measuring about 400 feet by 200 feet. The linear location of the angle of the breastwork extending in a northwest direction across the pasture behind and just above Main Street is identified on the contour map by a six to nine inch rise in elevation above the nearby surface. The rise appears visually evident when standing on the ground. It is an important remnant of the American works, and, along with much of the pasture south of this point, may represent a valuable archaeological site.

~~The route of the Mexican Gulf Railroad, constructed in the 1840s, passed along the south side of the earth-works and continued approximately on Main Street, ultimately joining what is now Judge Perez Drive. A "Map of the Proposed National Military Park Showing Rodriguez Canal and Jackson Breastworks," dated 12-11-33, in the archives of Chalmette National Park, shows the position of the "old right of way-Mexican Gulf Railroad" immediately south of the terminating angle of the breastwork. The right of way is shown as about 100 feet wide. This, and other uses of the land since 1815 have disturbed the integrity of the site, but the site remains undeveloped and is of major historical significance. This portion of the line deepest in the swamp was manned by Coffee's Tennessee troops and Captain Pierre Jugeant's Choctaw Indians.~~

Between the line of American defense and the British camp downriver was a distance of about a mile (in modern day, this is a drive along the St. Bernard Highway from the Chalmette Park entrance gate to the old Courthouse). The advanced British picket line was located about 3600 feet downriver from the American breastwork. The American sentry line was a drainage ditch bordered by a fence about 800 feet downriver from the Rodriguez Canal. Between these positions was a no-man's-land which the British crossed only to erect batteries in the night for an attack at daybreak. Between each attack, the British put out more picket lines and threw up more batteries. The batteries served several purposes: to defend

the British camp and picket positions, to bombard the American gun emplacements on both banks of the river, and to guard against American war ships coming up or down the river.

This area of the battlefield was occupied by the Chalmet and Bienvenu Plantations, and is now consumed by the large industrial developments of Kaiser Aluminum Plant and Tenneco Oil Company Refinery. Although this area is associated with British activities, it was also the territory wherein American reconnaissance and skirmish detachments carried out their operations. By day, Major Thomas Hinds' Mississippi Dragoons galloped across the fields, jumped ditches and fences, and harrassed the British pickets. They kept the British camp under observation while preventing British reconnaissance of American defenses. Their function in this regard was extremely important to eventual American victory. Being able to bring only a few horses through the marshlands, the British were lacking a similar mobile force.

By night, Captain Jugeant's Choctaw Indians and some of the Tennessee "Dirty Shirts" crept out of the swamp and shot British pickets. They constantly disturbed the sleep of the British camp. Such "barbarous" conduct on the part of the Americans was regarded by the British as "acting the part of assassins rather than soldiers" (Gleig, p.306). The effect of the nightly "hunting parties," as the

Tennesseans called them, was very demoralizing to the British Army.

The battleground was dissected by numerous drainage ditches, running both parallel and perpendicular to the river in geometric patterns. These were usually bordered by field access roads and post-and-rail or picket fences. The fences prevented animals from falling in the ditches. Some furrowed fields contained the stubble of cut-over cane, other fields supported vegetable gardens, and still others were reserved for pasture. As the natural levees declined toward the swamp, some of the fields became marshy. A few oak trees grew here and there, usually on the banks of the ditches. Identification of the present-day locations of some of these agricultural features of 1814-15, has made it possible to closely place many of the troop movements and battle actions in terms of correct topography.

DRAINAGE DITCHES ON THE BATTLEGROUND IN THE CHALMETTE NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK PROPERTY

The major drainage ditches that crossed the battlefield within the park property have been discovered by Birkedal to be extant. These are three ditches running perpendicular to the river and two ditches running parallel to the river. They were four or five feet wide in 1814-15. Today they are shallow depressions in the ground. They are described in Birkedal's report. Their positions, as designated by Birkedal, have been plotted on the maps with

~~this report. The ditches are important interpretative features as well as possible locations of archaeological artifacts.~~

THE BRITISH PICKET LINE DITCH

survives as a drainage ditch on the downriver side of the Kaiser Aluminum Plant entrance road. An old aerial photograph shows the road in the process of being laid on the upriver side of the ditch. The ditch ran through the lower Chalmet Plantation and bordered the garden of the house on the upriver side. Just below the ditch, at the rear of the house (toward the present-day St. Bernard Highway) were the probable sites of picket breastworks and a redoubt, described later in this report. The ditch has significance as the location of the picket guards who were the object of the scouting parties and night attacks of Hind's Horsemen and the Tennessee and Choctaw sharpshooters.

THE BIENVENU CANAL

The canal of the Bienvenu Plantation still exists as the "Guichard Canal." It borders the upriver side of Pakenham Drive and continues on the other side of the St. Bernard Highway as a smaller drainage ditch, passing through the forward portion of the British camp. Old maps do not make it clear how close the Bienvenu Canal approached the river in 1814-15, but the canal could contain battle artifacts.

"THE CENTER ROAD"

Birkedal located a slightly raised roadway within the park property which 1814-15 accounts called "the Center Road." It may have been so-called because it ran halfway between the

~~swamp and the river, or because it ran between the main public road on the river and a more distant road or roads.~~
The main public road that ran beside the levee was called by the British "the high road to New Orleans." It was higher and dryer than all other roads because the natural levees along the Mississippi have their greatest height near the bank of the river where most deposition is accumulated.

The Center Road was a farm access road that passed through the various plantations, at the rear of the plantation houses. A short-cut route across Pointe St. Antoine, it was probably an old road in 1814-15. At least portions of its length may have been remnants of old levee (river front) roads, left behind as the river bank advanced.

Early 1930s aerial photographs that show successive historic levee-road-ditch linear systems running diagonally across the fields and property divisions, show what appear to be the earliest (most removed from the river) diagonal markings cutting across the former Chalmet and Bienvenu Plantations from the middle of the National Cemetery toward, under and beyond the de La Ronde house ruin. Likewise, some of the British battle maps show the Center Road slanting diagonally down across the geometric field patterns, ditches, and property divisions. Such a slanting road, not conforming to agricultural features, and indeed, perhaps disrupting

~~their orderly functions, and slicing through the~~
~~succcessive properties, undoubtedly represents an old~~
 river road rather than a later planned thoroughfare.

The road section discovered by Birkedal within the park property slants slightly to the northeast and is slightly raised. Old oblique aerial photographs show that it was once raised in higher relief.

Le Page du Pratz, who lived in Louisiana between 1718 and 1734, described the earliest levee-road system as a single embankment serving a duel purpose:

On the banks of the river runs a causey, or mole, as well on the side of the town as on the opposite side, from the English Reach quite to the town, and about ten leagues beyond it; which makes about fifteen or sixteen leagues on each side the river; and which may be travelled in a coach or on horseback, on a bottom as smooth as a table....

The length of the causeys, I just mentioned, is sufficient to shew, that on these two sides of the Mississippi there are many habitations standing close together; each making a causey to secure his ground from inundations, which fail not to come every year with the spring....⁴

As the French colony developed, elaborate regulations were made to legally require property owners to maintain their river frontage:

4. Le Page du Pratz, Antoine Simon, The History of Louisiana, Translated from the French, London: T. Becket, 1774, p.51.

By 1731, the levee system extended 30 miles above English Turn to 12 miles below. In 1732, Governor Perier decreed that landowners along the Mississippi must make a clearing along the river front to the depth of 3 arpents (1 arpent equals 191.8 feet or 58.48 meters). Landowners were ordered to plant a 12-foot green oak or cypress post, 8 feet under ground with the part above ground not less than 4 feet in circumference. The posts were to be 8 toise (1 toise equals 6.4 feet or 1.95 meters) from the water and an arpent apart, and were for the convenience of landing. Levees 6 feet wide and not less than 2 feet high were to be built near the water's edge.⁵

Both the origins and route of the Center Road must be largely conjectural. Industrial development seems to have removed all traces that may have existed of the road for a mile downriver from the park property. The earliest map accurately delineating roads (U.S. Coast Survey, 1873) does not show a road slanting across the fields along the supposed route. However, the map does appear to show the Center Road from the de La Ronde Plantation downriver to the Jumonville Plantation. Traces of the road ^{or} ~~may~~ still exist along this stretch. It ran on the north side of the de La Ronde building complex (Hill, p.330), on or near the present streets named Trist and Reiss. There was a network of farm roads and lanes at the de La Ronde building complex and the Center Road may have diverged along several at this point. There was a road that ran along present-day Stander Street. It extended to

5. Gilmore, K., Archeological Testing at Fort St. Leon, 1983; citing T. Flint, The History and Geography of the Mississippi Valley, Cincinnati, 1832.

the ~~1814-15 River Road~~ and was the access road along de La Ronde's upriver property line, as well as his main entrance road. The Center Road could have angled down at this point to approximately the present-day St. Bernard Highway, then slanted toward Birkedal's road location in the park property. The Center Road could also have extended upriver along present-day Tyler Street to the Bienvenu Canal and then angled down; or it could have slanted downward from the vicinity of Stander and Trist Streets.

A road also passed through the double row of de La Ronde slave cabins. All slave cabin rows were divided by such roads or lanes. The British accounts called them "streets in the villages." These roads gave the slaves access to the fields and to neighboring plantation quarters and industrial works.

Dickson's journal sketch of battery placements, as well as other British maps, show the Center Road emerging from the center of the de La Ronde building complex, however Dickson's larger battle map, as well as other British maps, show that there were two roads leading upriver from the de La Ronde complex: one above the buildings and one emerging from the slave quarters. Dickson's larger map, and some other British maps, show a road curving downward from the de La Ronde slave cabins through those of Bienvenu and to the lower Chalmet Plantation complex. The contour of this

road appears to be defined by vegetation changes in 1930s air photographs.

The sketchiness and inconsistencies of the British maps makes it impossible to reconcile their differences. Archaeological investigation might help establish the location of the Center Road as it advanced from the British Camp to the Chalmette Battlefield.

British battle strategy was largely based on the routes of the River Road and the Center Road. In making their attacks, portions of the British force advanced along each road. Both roads were essential to the British as routes for advancing artillery. The numerous drainage ditches, field furrows, and fences, as well as wet ground conditions, made it impossible to bring their cannon to and from the front except by use of the roads. During battle actions, officers galloped to and fro on the Center Road, and it served as the best way of removing the wounded from the field, probably including Generals Keane, Gibbs and Pakenham. Any surviving portions of this road, such as that found by Birkedal in the park, are of historical significance for these reasons.

Downriver from the de La Ronde complex, the route of the Center Road followed approximately that shown on the 1873 Coast Survey map. As indicated on Latour's maps, and British maps, the road passed through the Lacoste slave cabin rows and angled around the rear of the Lacoste house garden hedge, then slanted or angled up to the Villere slave

cabins and crossed a bridge over the Villere Canal at the work yard of the sugarhouse. Until the British deepened and widened the Villere Canal, this bridge was the limit to which small boats could be brought in. It was the point at which the British disembarked their cannon. Its position was about 100 feet north of present-day Judge Perez Drive, over an extant portion of the Villere Canal. (Dickson's sketch plan of battery erected to sink the Schooner Carolina, Dickson's journal, p.7-8.)

On the downriver side of the Villere Plantation building complex, the Center Road continued to the Jumonville Plantation and through that slave quarter row. This route is today in an undeveloped, wooded area. It may be a viable archaeological site.

THE BRITISH BATTERIES

Birkedal has located the probable positions of the two British "advanced batteries" that flanked the Center Road. These are within the National Cemetery and a rise in the ground is apparent at this location. Another rise in the ground in the cemetery, nearer the river, may represent the location of Captain Lane's Rocket Battery. It is about 650 feet north of the present River Road, on the downriver side of the cemetery driveway.

Yet another rocket battery, that of Lieutenant Crawley, may have been located at the north end of the cemetery, possibly just outside the wall and downriver from the entrance, where the land has been artificially embanked

(~~the top soil appears to be recent deposit~~). Both these batteries were erected on December 31 for the artillery battle of January 1st. Their positions have been approximately plotted from Dickson's journal sketch of battery installations, Dickson's journal account p.33, Latour p.131, and Tatum p.120. The batteries were fronted by a ditch. The position of this ditch has been plotted by Birkedal as extending along the present position of the cemetery driveway. Converting Latour's yards into toises, and then into feet, the distance he gives for Carmichael's seven-gun battery, from the 1814-15 river bank, is 1118.95 feet; the distance of the batteries for 10 guns on either side of the Center Road he gives as 2078.05 feet from the river bank.

In his sketch, Dickson shows Captain Lempriere's two-gun battery on the River Road as being in advance of the rest of the batteries. Tatum recorded this battery as "about 100 paces (about 300 feet) below the head of the Ditch and near the corner of Brown's enclosure" (Brown's House, the "Main Picket House", the lower Chalmet Plantation; or perhaps Tatum was speaking of the upper Chalmet Plantation which Brown actually owned). Perhaps Dickson's intended position for the battery was altered.

In his plan of the battle of the 8th, Latour shows a "Battery erected on the 28th December 1814" located on the River Road near the downriver side of the Chalmet Plantation

buildings. ~~Although field pieces were positioned here on~~
~~December 28th, no battery was erected on that date.~~ Reid
 and Eaton's plan of the battle of the 8th also shows a
 battery located in this position, as do most of the British
 maps. Laclotte's engraved "Key to the Print" (his print
 of the Battle of New Orleans) locates "an uncovered battery"
 downriver from the Chalmette ruins, 455 toises, or 2909
 feet from the American line, on the public road. This would
 place the battery a little further downriver than shown on
 the map with this report. In anycase, the 1814-15 river
 road and levee have been taken by the river for one mile
 below the American line.

Dickson described the batteries as "constructed of
 sugar casks filled with earth not rammed, one cask thick
 and backed up, only one cask high, and earth heaped up from
 which height also the platform (for guns) took off something,
 so that the men standing up were only covered to the lower
 part of the breast." (p.39)

It is possible that a portion of the site of Carmichael's
 seven-gun battery may be also located within the National
 Cemetery. This battery was reconstructed on the night of
 January 7th for the battle of the 8th.

Surface expression appear not to survive of batteries amid
 industry downriver from the National Cemetery. Their approx-
 mate positions have been plotted on maps with this report.
 Two British batteries in this area played very important roles.
 One of these was Lt. Spear's hot shot battery erected in the
 upriver corner of the garden of the lower Chalmet Plantation

House (Dickson's journal plan). This battery prevented the ship "Louisiana" from descending the river and bombarding the British Camp.

The other rear battery that also played an important role was the Engineer Redoubt where the fascines and ladders were kept for the assault of January 8th. It was this redoubt that the advance troops of the 44th under Colonel Thomas Mullins passed without collecting the fascines and ladders with which to cross the Rodriguez Canal. Upon this blunder, the British largely blamed defeat. According to Mullins' court martial proceedings (p.38), as well as other accounts, this redoubt was located 1500 feet to the rear of the "advanced battery" and was fronted by a ditch.

This was probably a ditch on the lower Chalmet Plantation that still exists as one on the lower side of the aluminum plant entrance road. A grassy area southeast of the road's crossing of the railroad tracks could have been the site of the redoubt, or it could have been in some other nearby position.

The Engineer Redoubt and another redoubt to the northeast, have been drawn on maps with this report according to exact measurements given by Latour (p. 136-137). The shapes and sizes of the other batteries are approximate.

THE CHALMET PLANTATION

The layouts of the Upper and Lower Chalmet Plantations have been taken from maps of Latour and Dickson. Not a trace remains of the upper plantation. Before being burned

on December 28 by General Jackson's orders to clear the field in front of the American lines, it served as headquarters for Hind's Mississippi mounted riflemen.

THE CHALMET OAK TREE

Of the site of the lower Chalmet Plantation, one old, ill oak tree survives. The house was burned by Commodore Patterson's hot shot from his West Bank batteries on January 6th. This lower plantation of six arpents frontage was purchased by Ignace de Lino de Chalmet (he spelled his name without the last "te") in 1805. Chalmet bought the upper plantation of more than 16 arpents (which included the "Rodriguez Canal") in 1813. An earlier owner of this upper plantation was William Brown, U.S. Collector of Customs at New Orleans. During his ownership, in 1809, Brown embezzled public funds and fled the country. His plantation property was then seized by the United States and later sold at auction.

As the British advanced up the river, they inquired of the Negroes left on the plantations as to the names of the owners of the properties. They apparently somehow came to understand that the lower Chalmet Plantation, which was the original Chalmet Plantation, belonged to a Mr. Brown. The British records therefore refer to the lower Chalmet Plantation as "Brown's House." This has caused some confusion in previous attempts to understand the British movements below the field of battle.

~~"Brown's House" was also called by the British~~
the "Piquet House" or ~~"Main Piquet House."~~ It was so
called because a drainage ditch that ran along the upper
side and back of the house and garden served as the
advanced picket line of their camp. (Dickson's jornal
sketch of battery positions; Latour's large battle map
contradicts Dickson's placements of these plantation
buildings and batteries and is probably in error.)

It can not be clearly documented if the house,
garden and outbuildings were located near the lower side
of the six arpent tract, or if they were centrally located.
The complex may have been slightly upriver from the position
shown on the map with this study. Lt. Spear's ship battery
was situated in the upriver corner of the formal garden
parterre of the house. Under a "high laurel hedge" and
behind a ditch on the upriver side of the parterre was the
"Entrenchment of Piquet" (Dickson's journal sketch). The
Engineer Redoubt was located at the rear of the property.

Along with the adjoining Rodriguez Plantation, the
upper Chalmet Plantation was the scene of the heaviest
fighting on December 28th, January 1st and January 8th.
When the British advanced on December 28th, the route can
be traced of the column that moved forward behind the post-
and-rail fence on the lower side of the "double ditch"
running parellel to and above the Center Road, within the
park property. They halted about 150 feet east of the
portion of the old Fazendeville Road which connects with
the park loop road ("100 paces in advance of the first ditch,"

Tatum, p.115; Tatum's "first ditch" was actually the second ditch in advance of the American line.) The position assumed in error by Colonel Henderson and 200 of General Carroll's men when sent to skirmish with the column can now also be approximately placed. Henderson misunderstood his orders, which were to advance through the edge of the cypress swamp toward the column on the "double ditches." Instead he obliques across the field, out of the marshy area, to a dry knoll near the "first ditch" and formed his men for battle action. Being exposed in a cross fire between the British cannon on the Center Road, the British riflemen in the "second ditch," (in today's National Cemetery), and those behind the fence at the "double ditch," as well as the fire from the American line, Colonel Henderson and five of his men were killed. The skirmish party then retreated. The approximate location where the 200 men formed for battle was under the upward curve of the top of the park loop drive, where the loop road crosses the "first ditch." This is about 400 feet east of the Fazendeville Road. (Tatum, p.115-116; Latour, p.123; Reid, p.342-343.)

The British actions of January 8th can also be better placed. In accordance with present-day geography, General Gibbs column of attack screened itself behind the cypress wood as it advanced. The wood line began just north of the St. Bernard Highway and curved away from the river through

what is now a residential sub-division, probably about where the contour elevation of the natural levee drops to 0.0 (sea level), near Packenham Avenue and slanting toward the northeast. Skirting the swamp, Gibbs column moved out of what is now this subdivision, crossed the highway and the railroad tracks near Chalmette Street and the National Cemetery, and moved into the park property above the "double ditches," heading toward batteries #7 and #8. The morning fog also helped to disguise their advance. According to Latour, "When the column first advanced to the attack, the troops partly moved forward along the skirt of the wood, which in that part forms a curve, and were by that means covered till they came within two hundred yards of our lines." (p.157) When first observed, there, Gibb force was about at the old Fazendeville Road.

Birkedal's positioning of the Center Road and the advance battery allows for the locating of the route of the troops carrying fascines (Mullins, p.81, p.93). General Lambert apparently also made use of the Center Road when he advanced with the reserve to a drainage ditch at the later Fazendeville Road location (the American picket line ditch). In his letter to Earl Bathurst, 1/10,1815, Lambert said "as I advanced with the reserve, at about two hundred and fifty yards from the line, I had the mortification to observe the whole falling back upon me in the greatest confusion."

The oblique line of march of General Keane's Highlanders

~~can be approximately drawn from behind the site of the burnt ruins of the upper Chalmet house (now a refuse dump), across the middle of the National Cemetery, to about the point where the park loop road exits through the breastworks. It was approximately here that General Keane fell wounded. Generals Gibbs and Pakenham also fell mortally wounded near the breast work, further toward the park boundary.~~

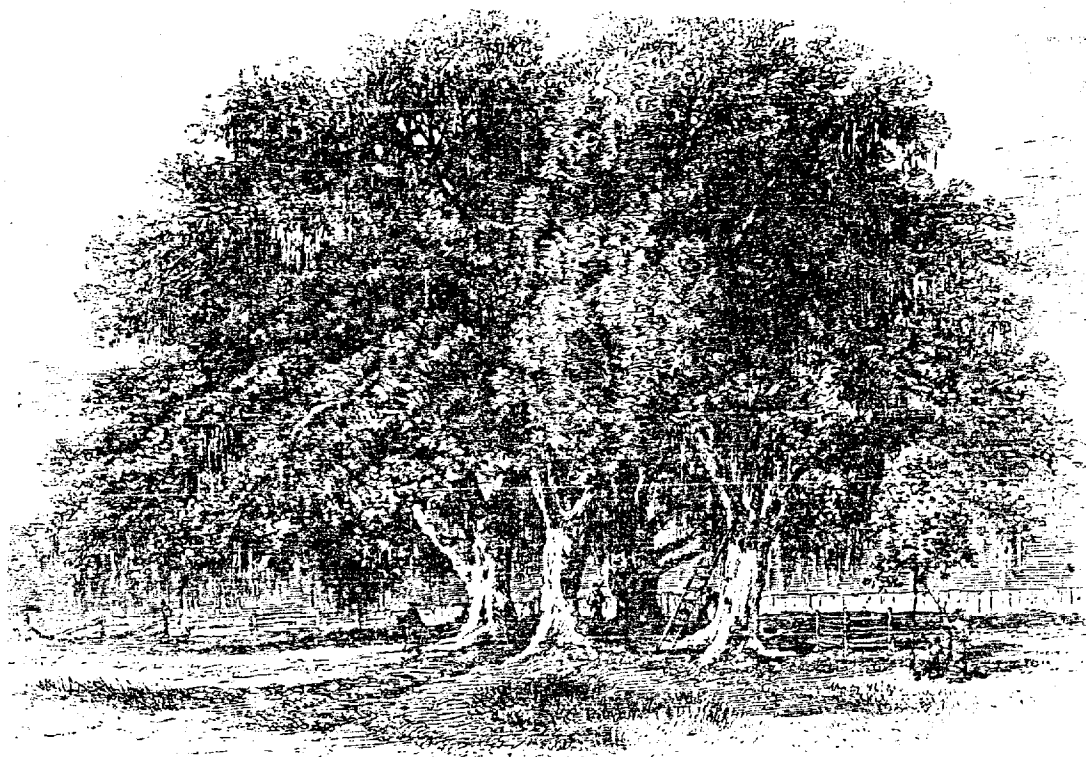
Latour placed Pakenham's fall in the middle of the field of battle. Other records show that he fell very near the American breastwork. Pakenham's wounded horse could have stumbled away for some distance before falling, leading some to the assumption that Pakenham fell where his horse died. But the wounded Pakenham mounted the Creole pony of his aide and continued toward the fire of the American line.

In a letter written by Ensign Graves to Colonel Maunsel White, published in The Delta, January 8, 1854, Graves described being near the breastwork and ditch when "I felt something rub against my epaulettes on my left. I turned and found it was Sir Edward Pakenham's horse's neck rubbing against me; an aide was leading the horse, the general having been shot through the arm. He had his hat in the other hand, which he waved in the air, crying 'Come on, brave Nineth-third.' In a moment I missed the horse's head which was so near me; on looking back I saw him falling backwards."

Lambert's letter of January 10 places Pakenham's fall "on the crest of the glacis." By "glacis" was meant the sloping bank of earth on the downriver side of the Rodriguez Canal.

The route of the dash of Colonel Rennie's light companies for the redoubt at the river is difficult to document. According to Cooke, the companies formed "near the battery on the high road to New Orleans." (p.228) By other accounts, Rennie's men hid behind the Chalmet house ruins and obliqued to the river road and levee, either from the north or south side of the ruins. In any case, most or all of the route taken by these troops who captured the redoubt has been taken by the river, as has the position of the redoubt where Rennie was killed mounting the main breastwork.

THE BRITISH CAMP AND THE BATTLEGROUND
OF THE NIGHT BATTLE OF DECEMBER 23, 1814

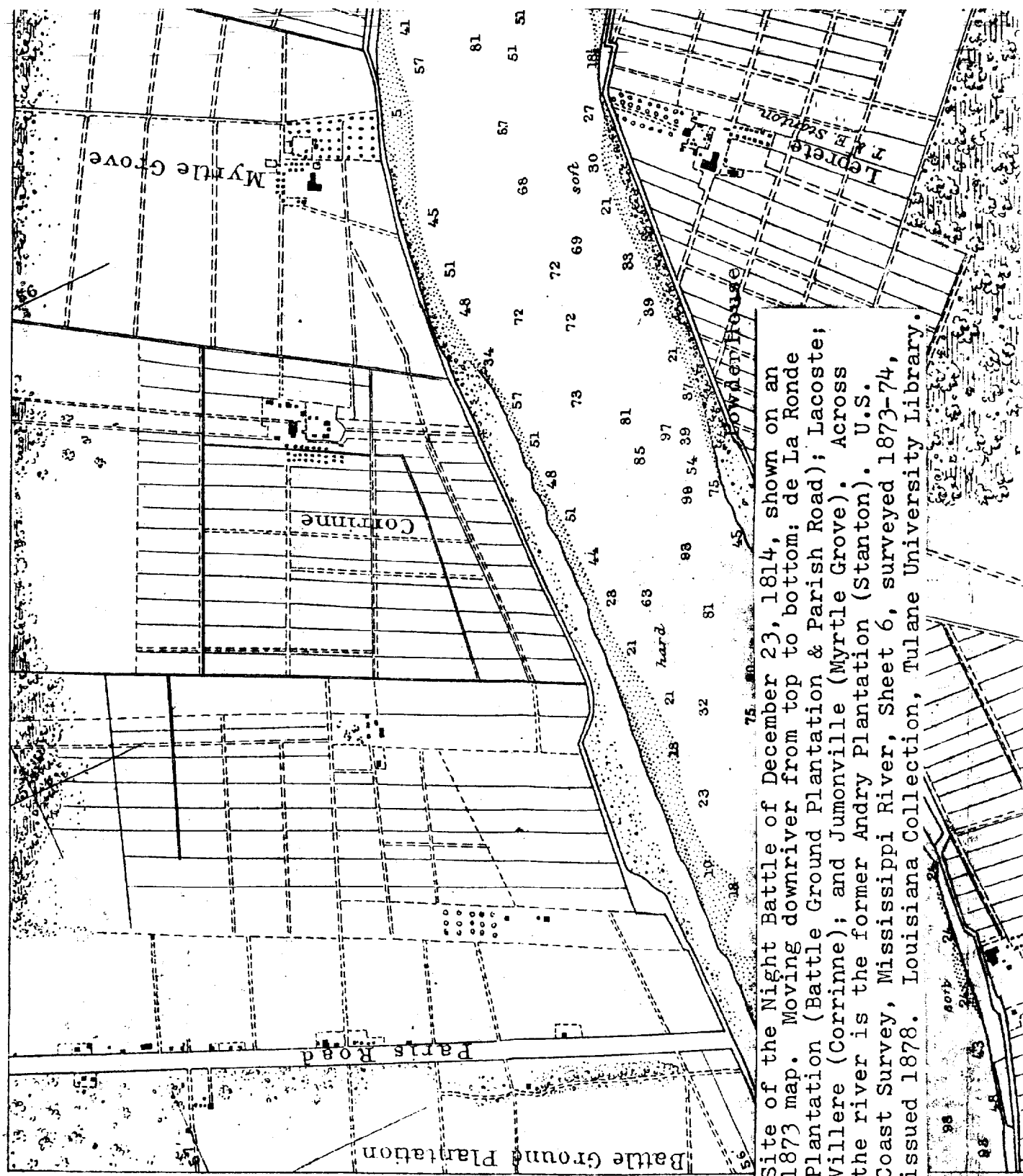


HISTORICAL TREES.—LIVE OAKS ON THE BATTLE-FIELD OF NEW ORLEANS.

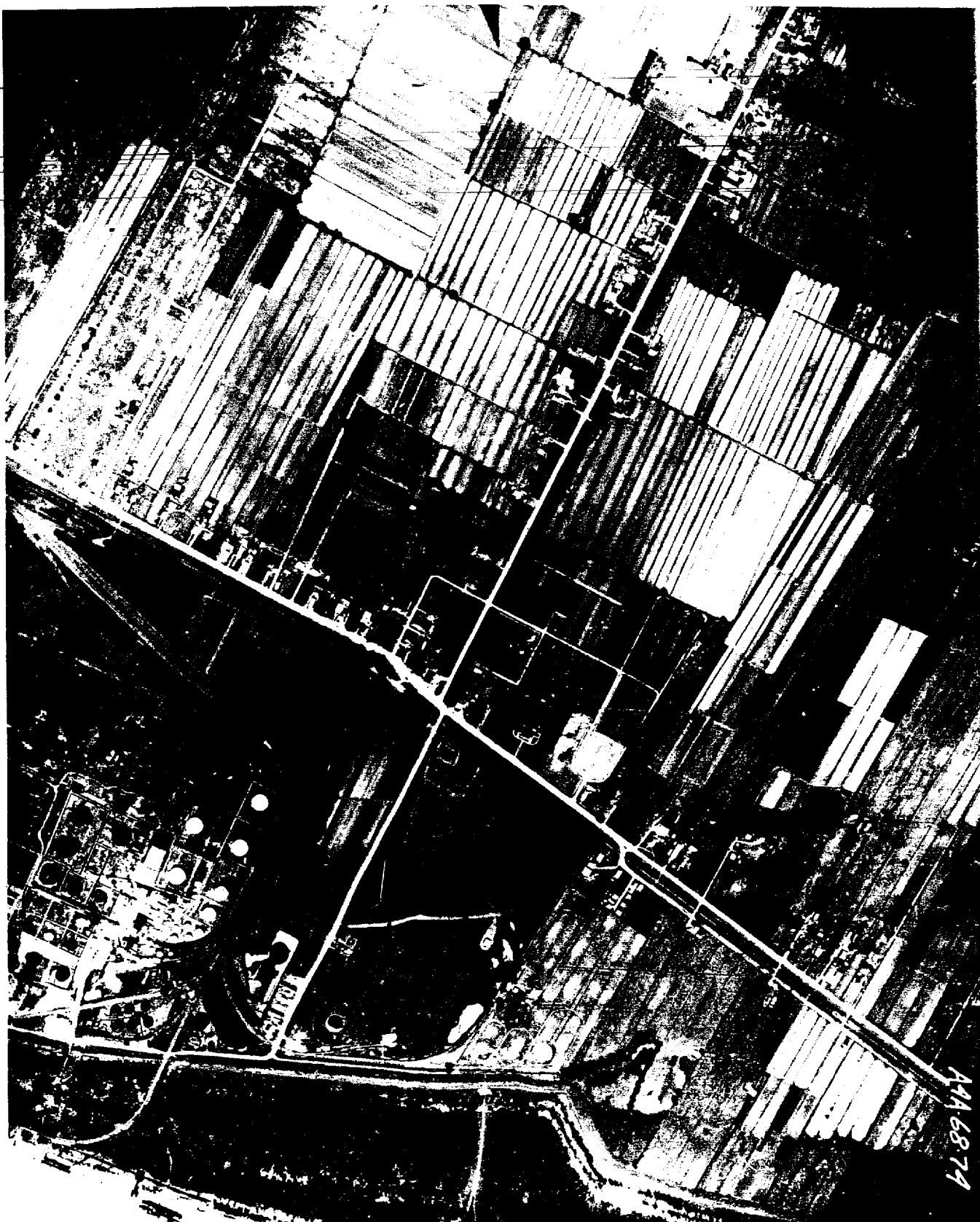
"The Four Oaks," 19th century engraving. Louisiana Collection, Tulane University Library.



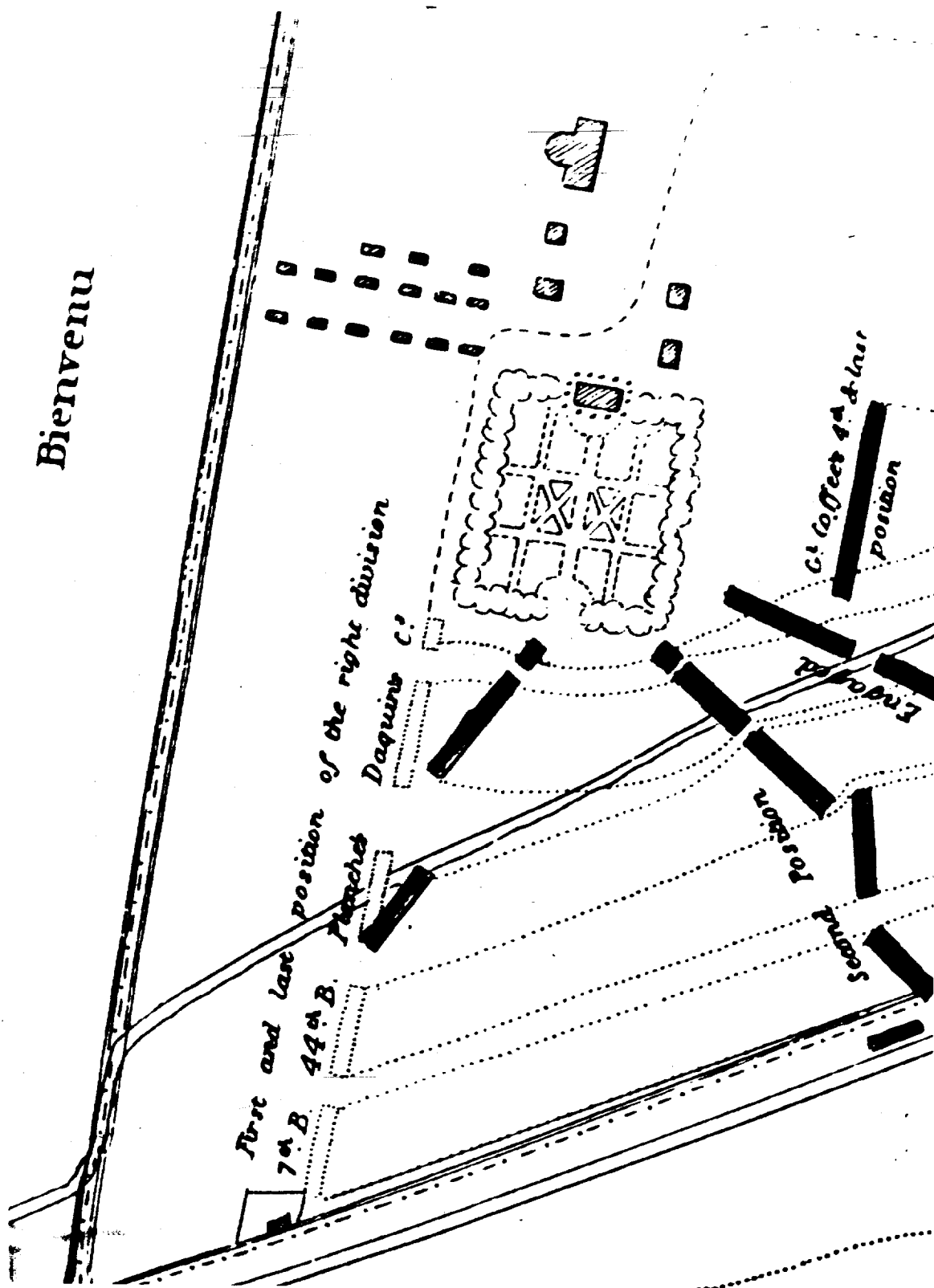
1945 air photo, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New Orleans District. Left to right: Bienvenu, de La Ronde, Lacoste, Villere and Jumonville Plantations, showing old levee lines.



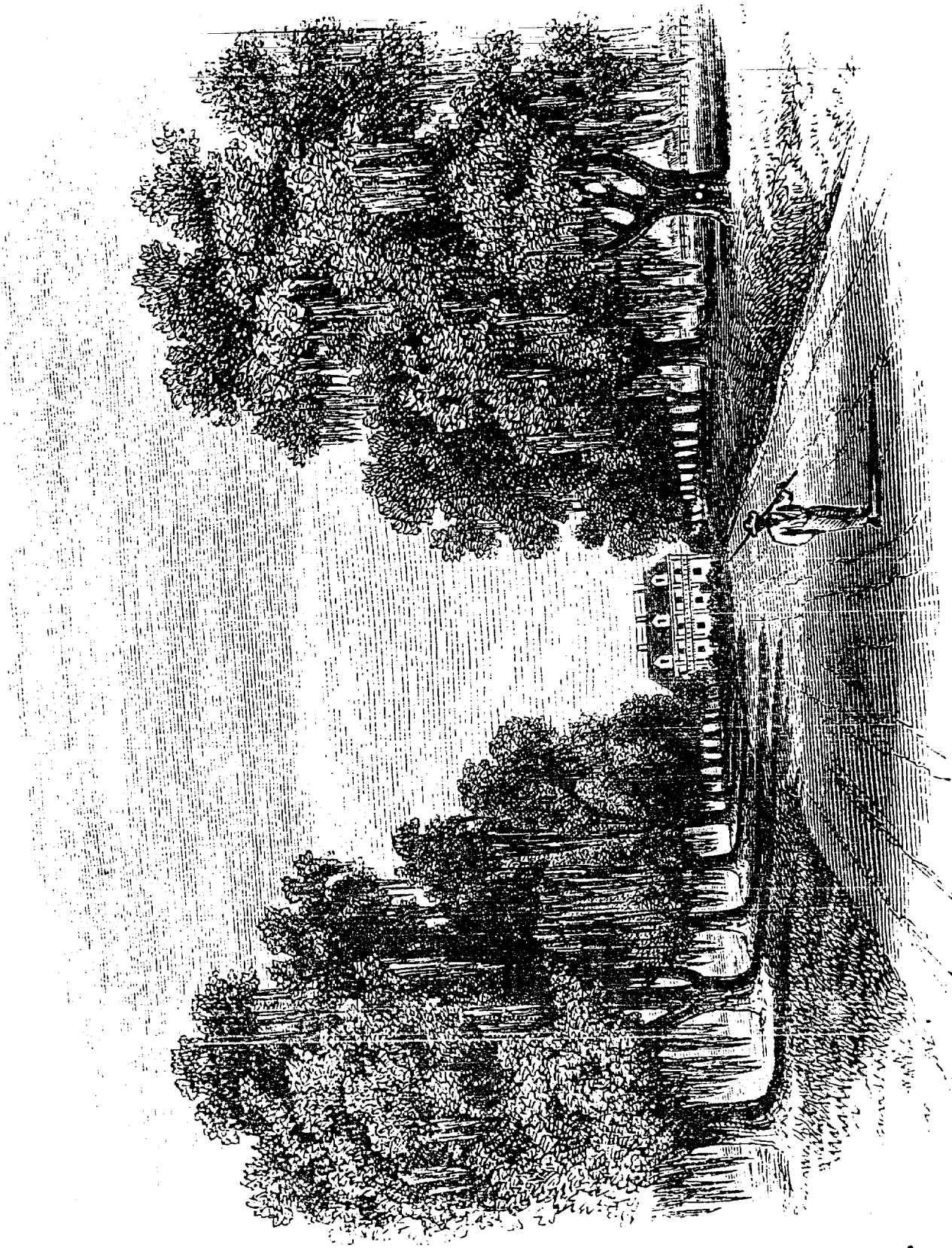
Site of the Night Battle of December 23, 1814, shown on an 1873 map. Moving downriver from top to bottom: de La Ronde Plantation (Battle Ground Plantation & Parish Road); Lacoste; Villere (Corrinne); and Jumonville (Myrtle Grove). Across the river is the former Andry Plantation (Stanton). U.S. Coast Survey, Mississippi River, Sheet 6, surveyed 1873-74, issued 1878. Louisiana Collection, Tulane University Library.



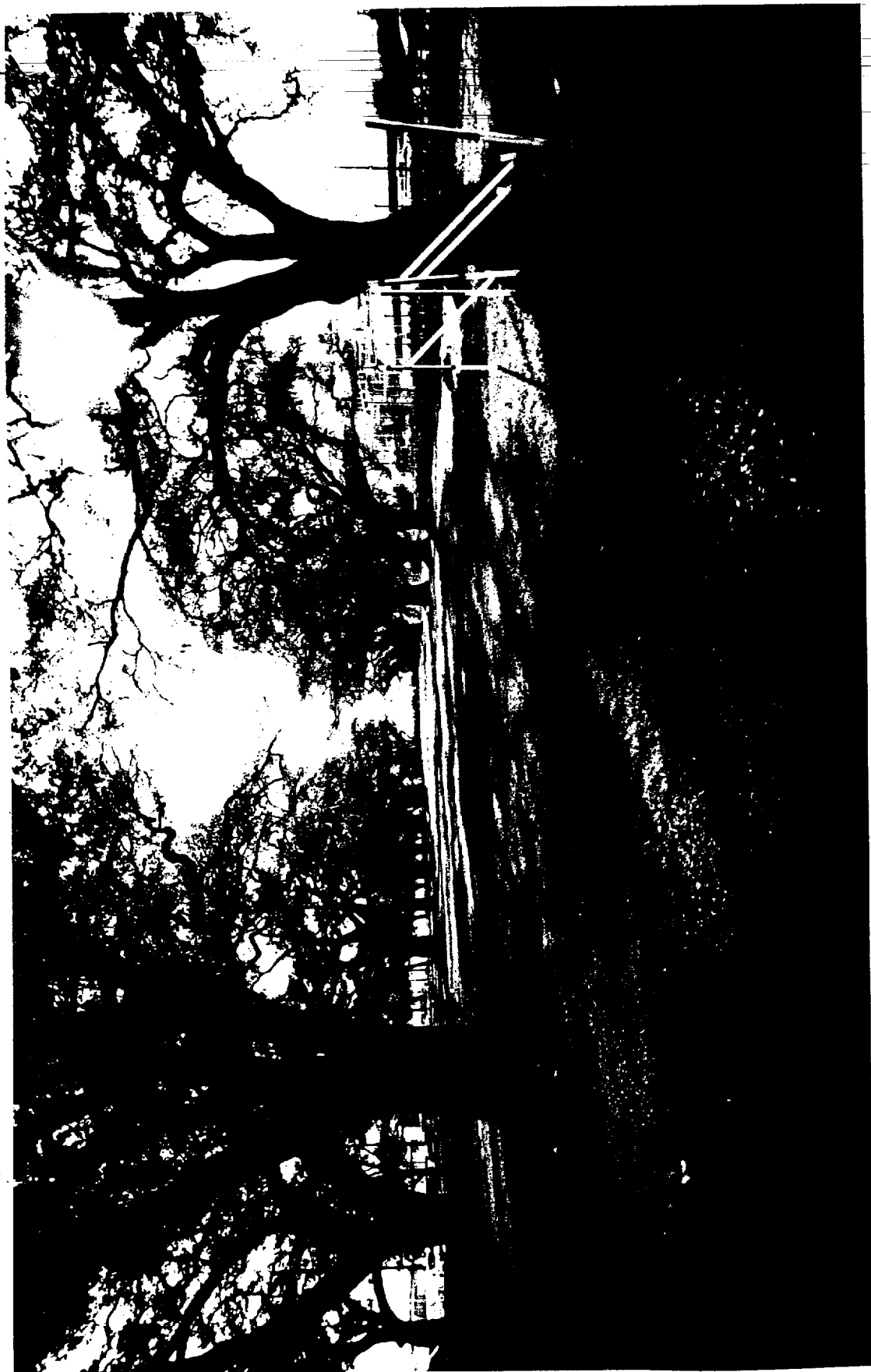
De La Ronde Plantation.
Sept. 5, 1933. 1:20,000.
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.



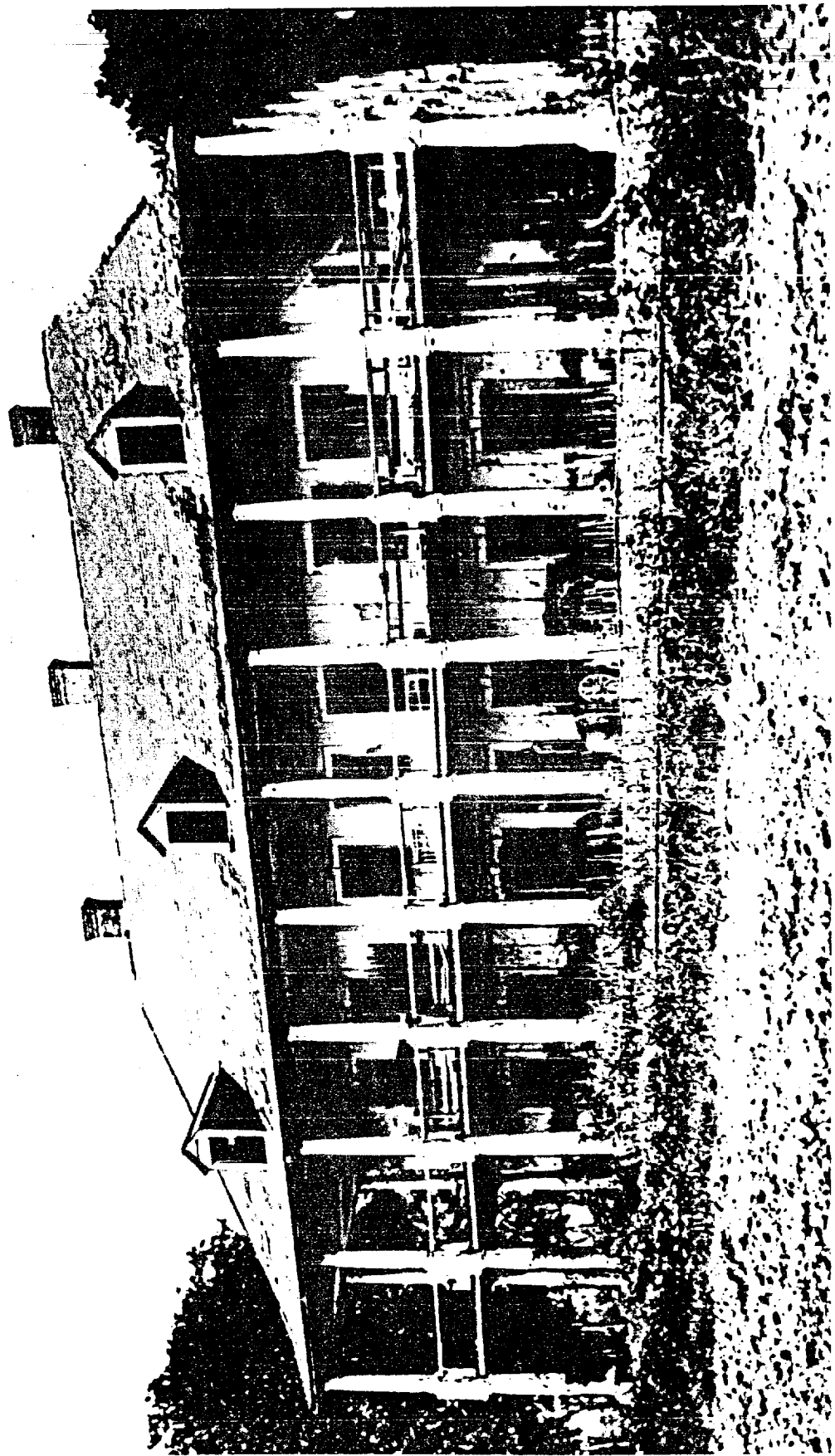
De La Ronde Plantation, detail from Latour's night battle of December 23.



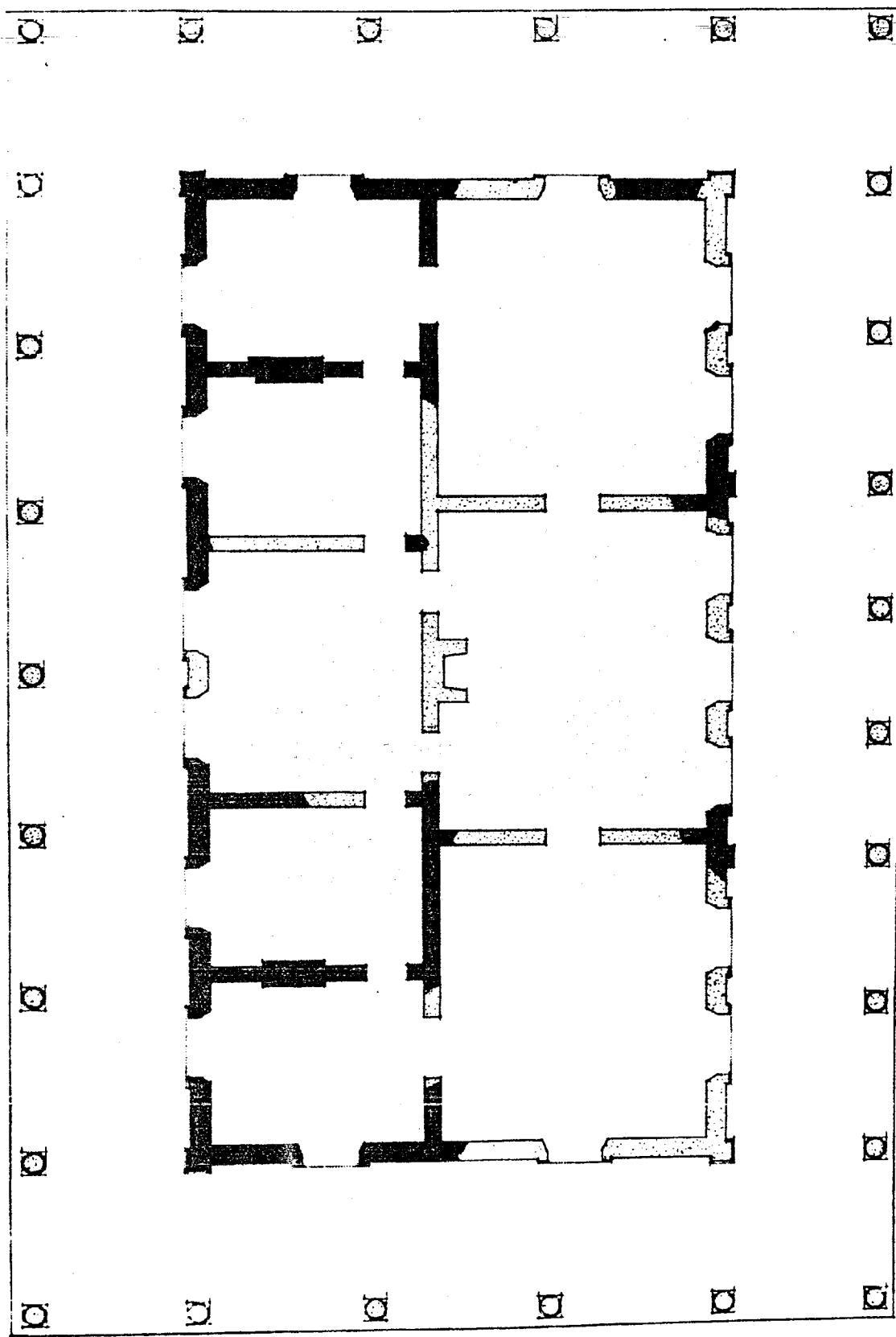
De La Ronde Plantation House, engraving after sketch of April, 1861, Benson
J. Lossing, The Pictorial Field Book of the War of 1812, 1868.



"The Pakenham Oaks," planted soon after the Battle of New Orleans on the de la Ronde Plantation. Looking s.w. toward river. Photo: B. Swanson, 1/1985.



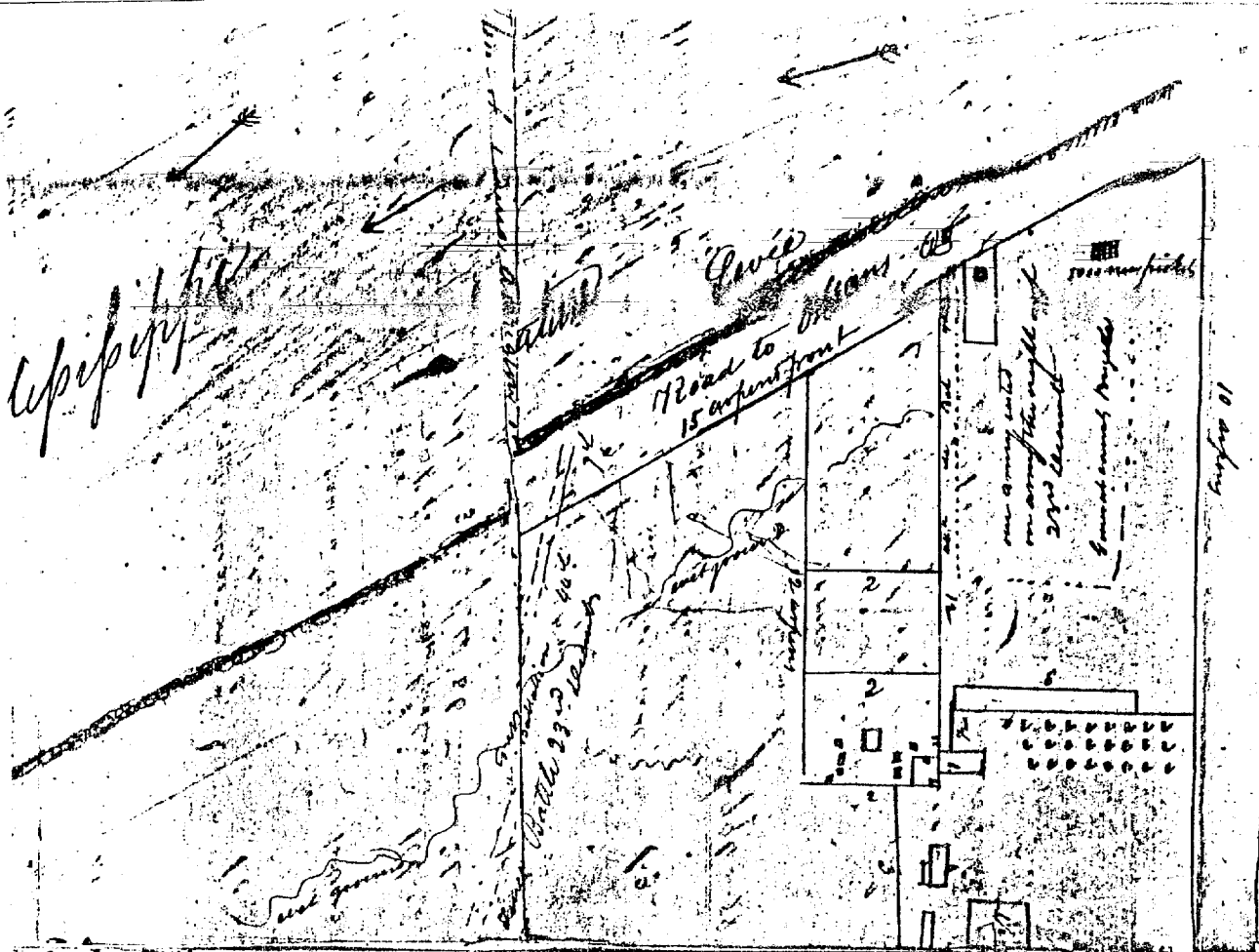
De La Ronde Plantation House, river facade. Photograph by George François Mugnier, ca.1885, shortly before building burned. (Southeastern Architectural Archive, Tulane University Library, New Orleans)



Ground floor plan of the de La Ronde house. Black areas indicates walls standing in 1949. Plan by Samuel Wilson, Jr. From Wilson, Plantation Houses on the Battlefield of New Orleans, 1965.



De La Ronde House Ruins. Looking n.e.
toward front of house.
Photo: B. Swanson, 1/1985.



Lacoste Plantation

Notes of 1st of company fence arpentage

15 arpents front

15 1/2 arpents

General coffee (Moguel) in camp

99 1/2 arpents which on night 23 of December

at 102 feet 1/2 to the arpent

Makey 15184

1936 picked on my out-house

250 do left 1/2 mile from

15320

5000 New-mys burned

20320

Col. Larondy Plantation

Sugar Can Field

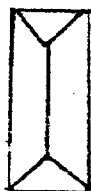
20 arpents corded

44 arpents

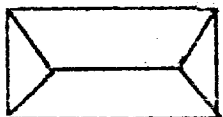
Plan of portions of the de La Ronde and Lacoste Plantations, showing battle lines and positions of troops on December 23, and linear arpents of fence pickets. Records of the United States Senate, 16th Congress, National Archives, Washington D.C.

GRANDS HOMMES

De La Ronde Plantation
buildings on "Plan de
Versailles," Jh. Pilie,
draftsman, April 10, 1837.
Tracing from Tube 44,
New Orleans Notarial
Archives.



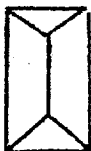
CASA - CALVO



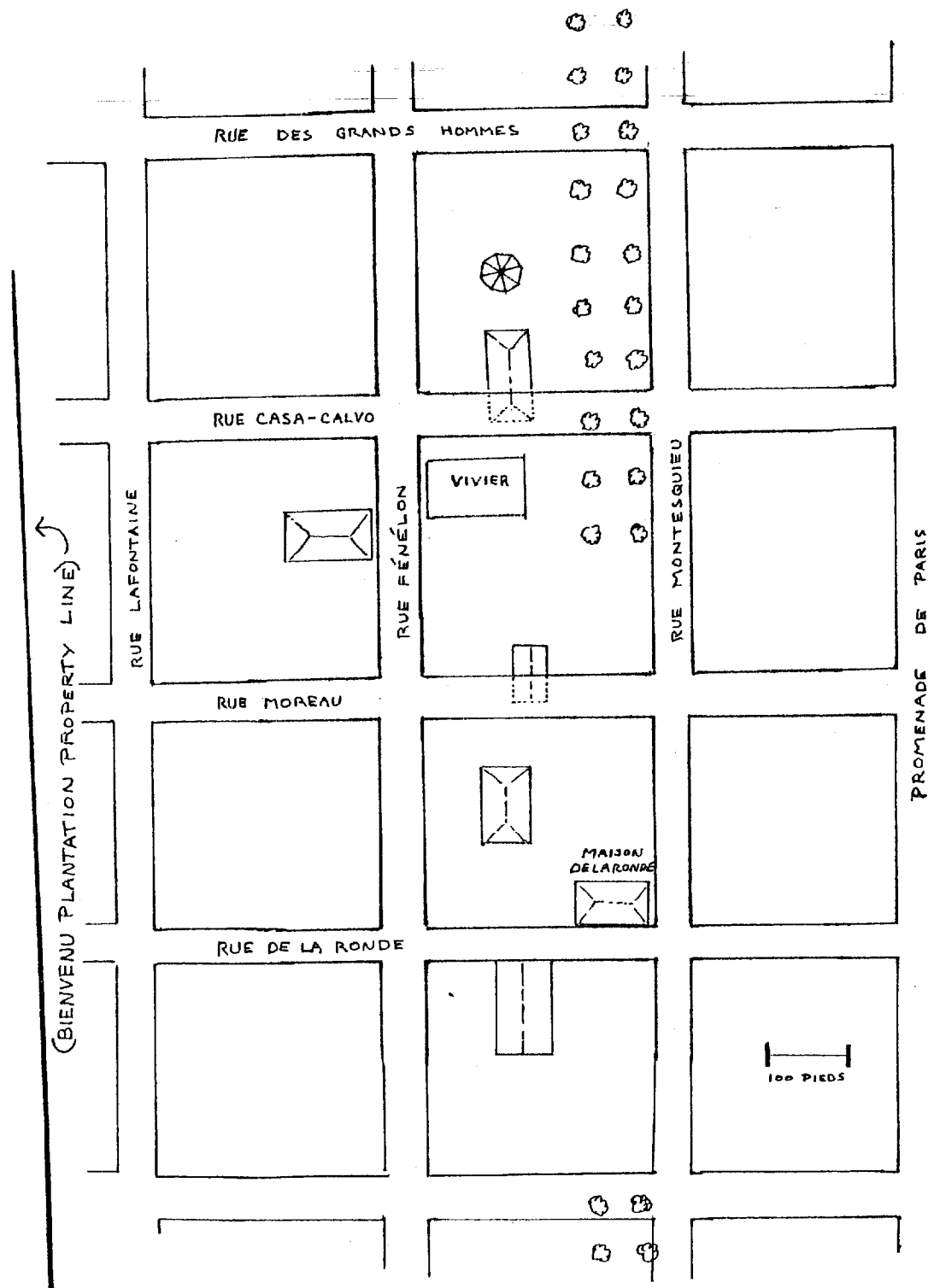
FÉNÉLON

MONTESQUIEU

MOREAU



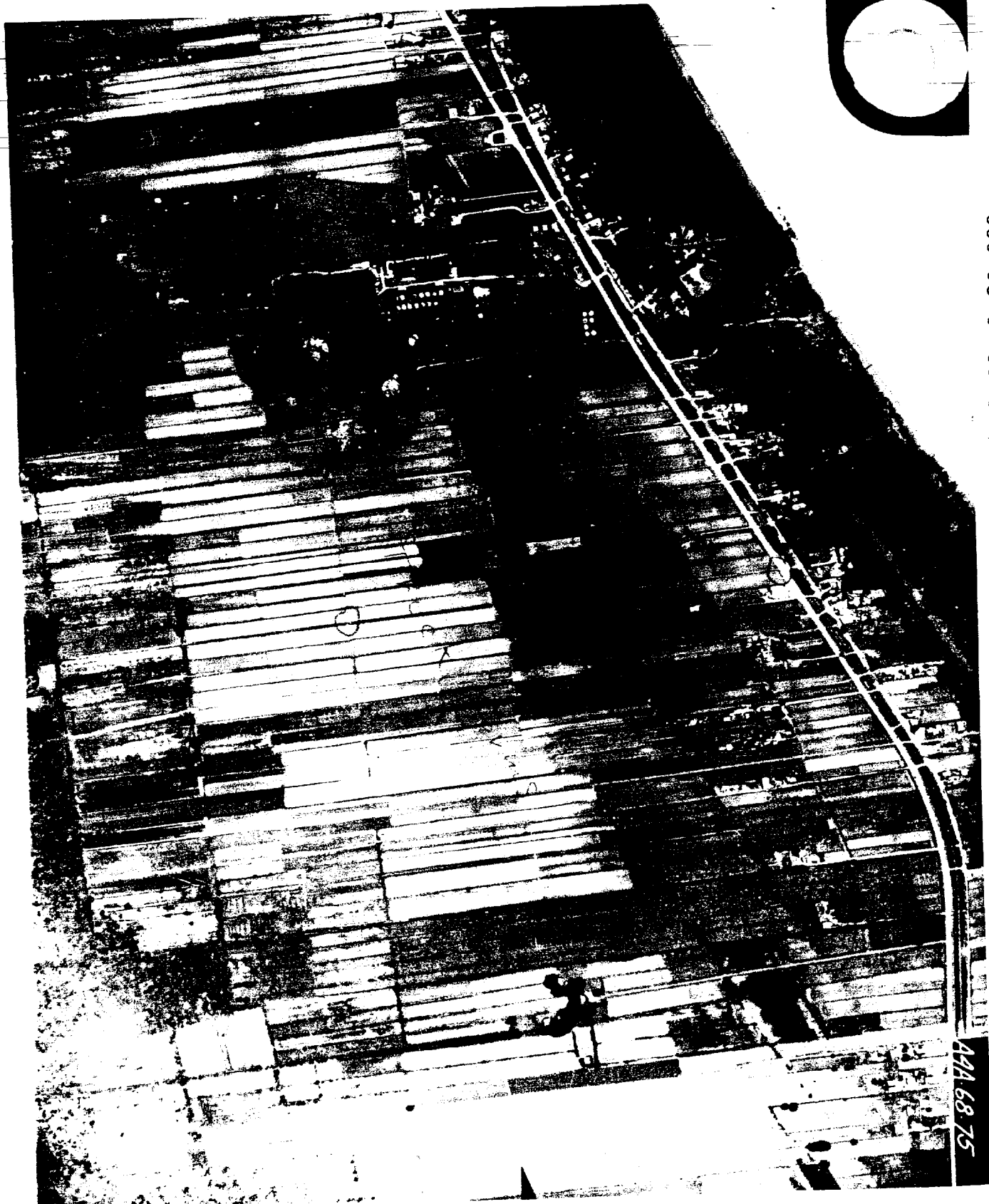
DE LA RONDE



De La Ronde Plantation buildings shown on "Plan de huit îlets de terre situés à Versailles...", no draftsman, no date (ca.1840s), tracing of a detail of Book 92, folio 20, New Orleans Notarial Archives.



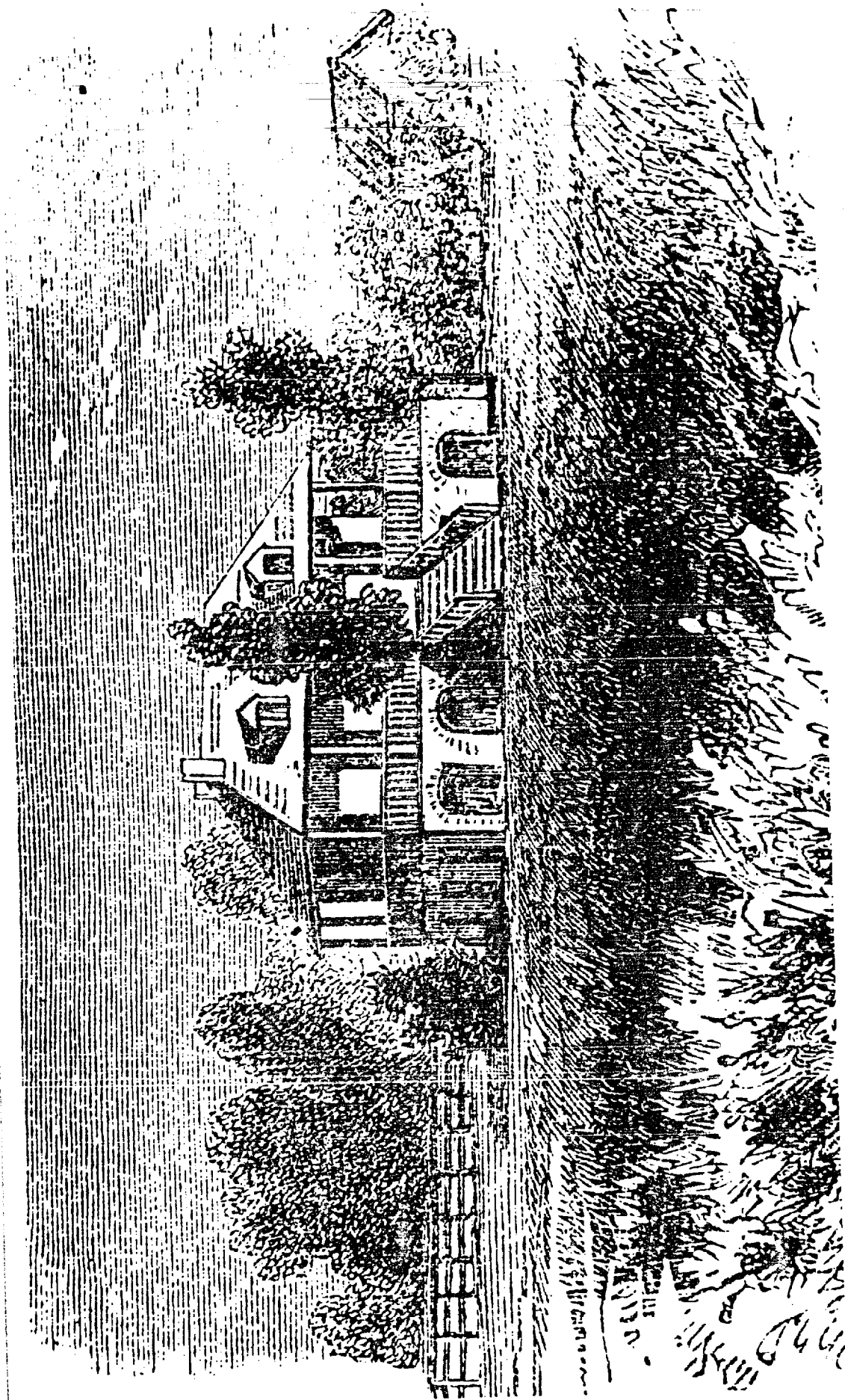
Pasture behind de La Ronde House ruin
containing foundations of agricultural
building. Looking n.w. toward sugar
house site. Note depression at left.
Photo: B.Swanson, 1/1985.



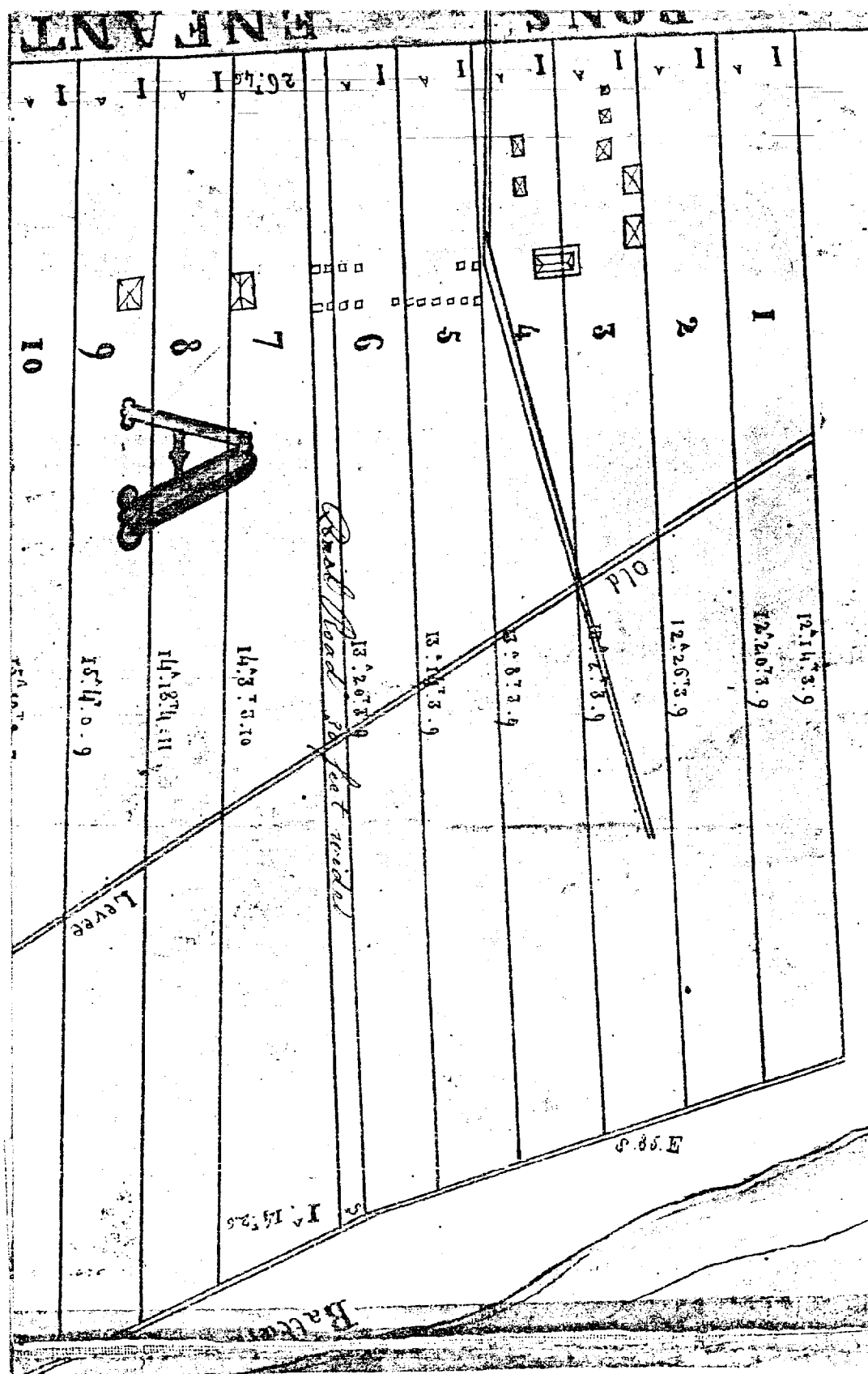
AAA 68 75

Iacoste and Villere Plantations.

Sept. 5, 1933. 1:20,000.
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

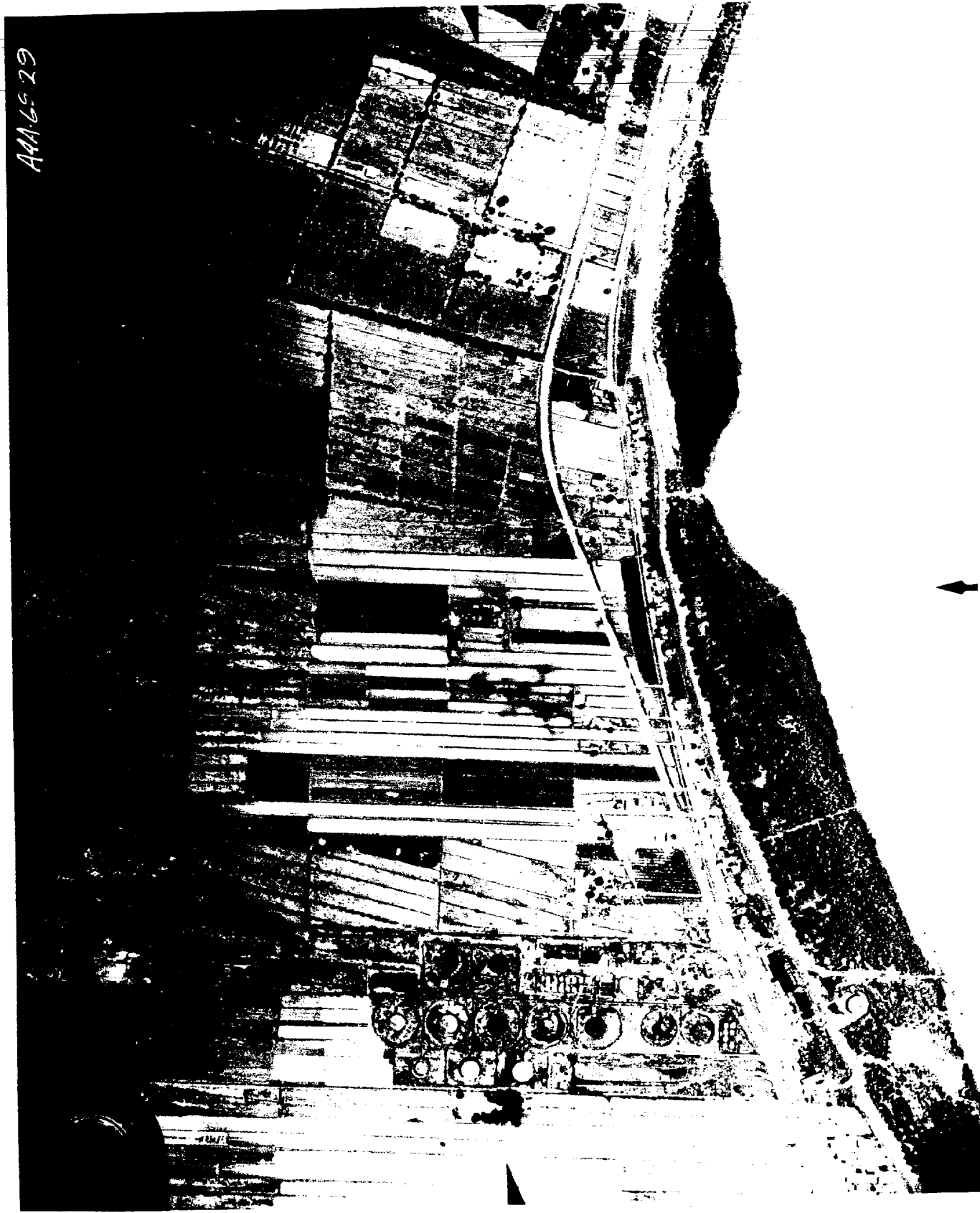


Lacoste Plantation House, engraving after sketch of April 1861, Benson J. Lossing, The Pictorial Field Book of the War of 1812, 1868.

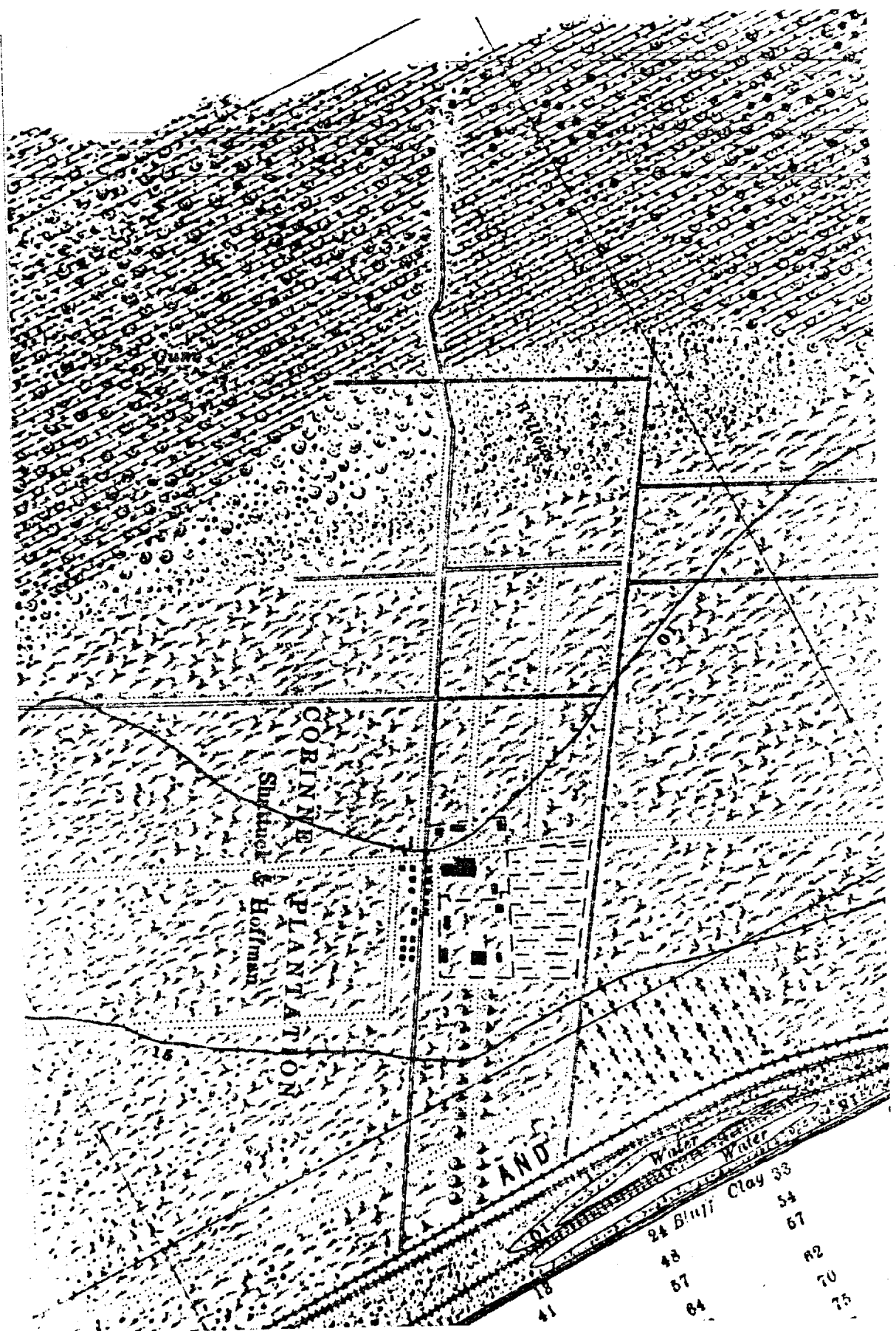


"Plan of the Lacoste Plantation divided into large lots," detail. No date, no draftsman. New Orleans Notarial Archives. (Note position of "Old Levee." levee, river, and Bons Enfants- old right of way of Mexican Gulf Railroad- now Judge Perez Dr.. in relation to house. Each 1-arpent lot is 192 feet wide.)

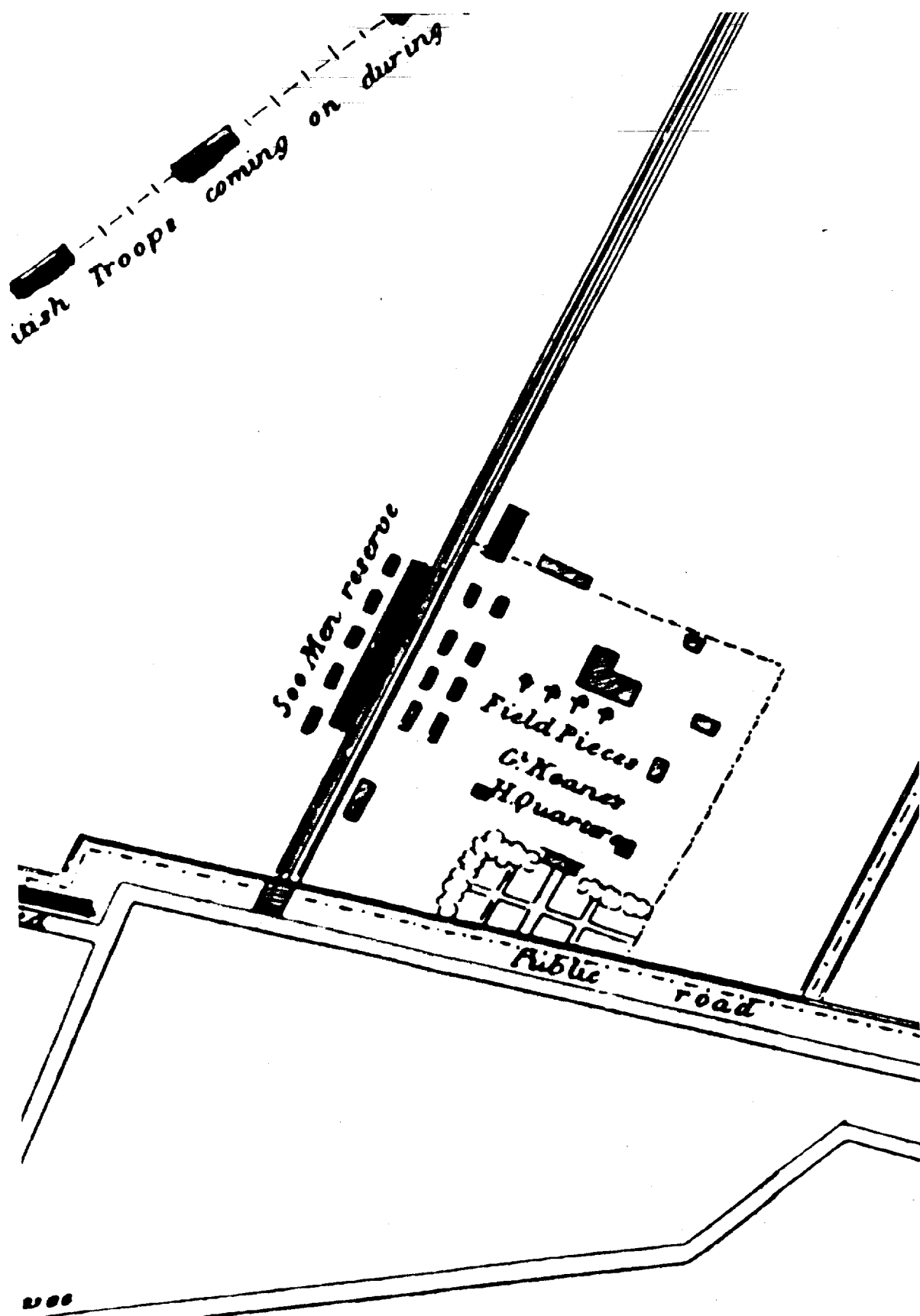
AAA 65 29



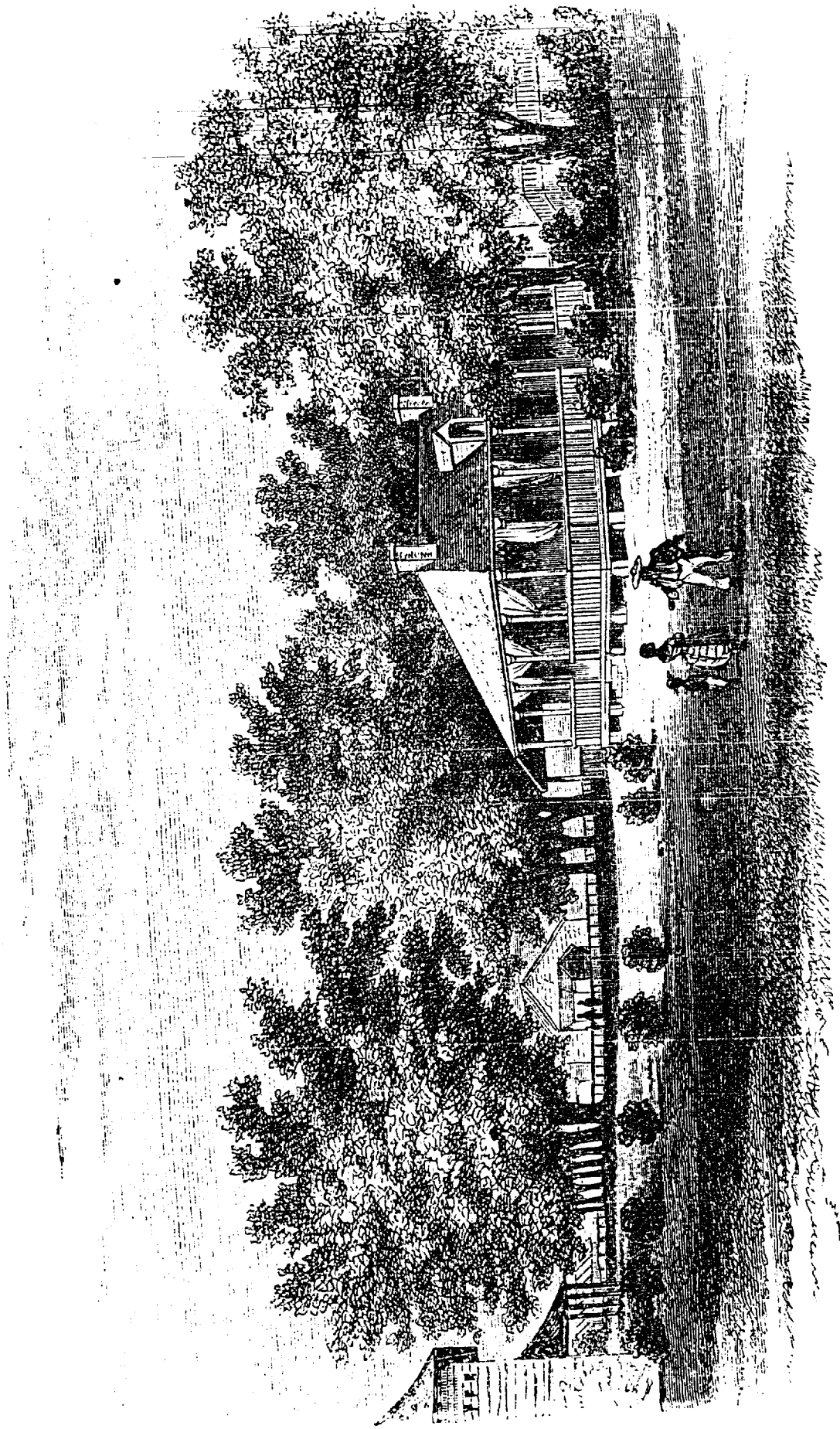
Villere and Jumonville Plantations. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.
Sept. 5, 1933. 1:20,000.



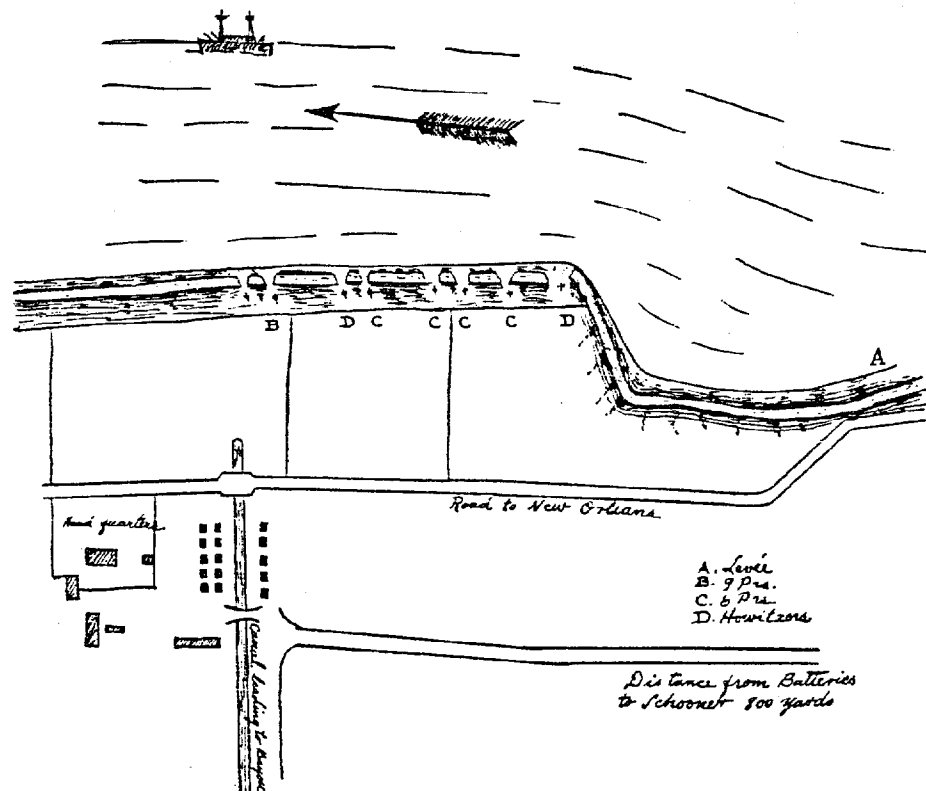
Villere (Corine) Plantation in 1893, showing Villere's Canal. Mississippi River Commission Survey Chart #76. 1874, updated and reprinted 1893-94. Louisiana Collection, Tulane University Library.



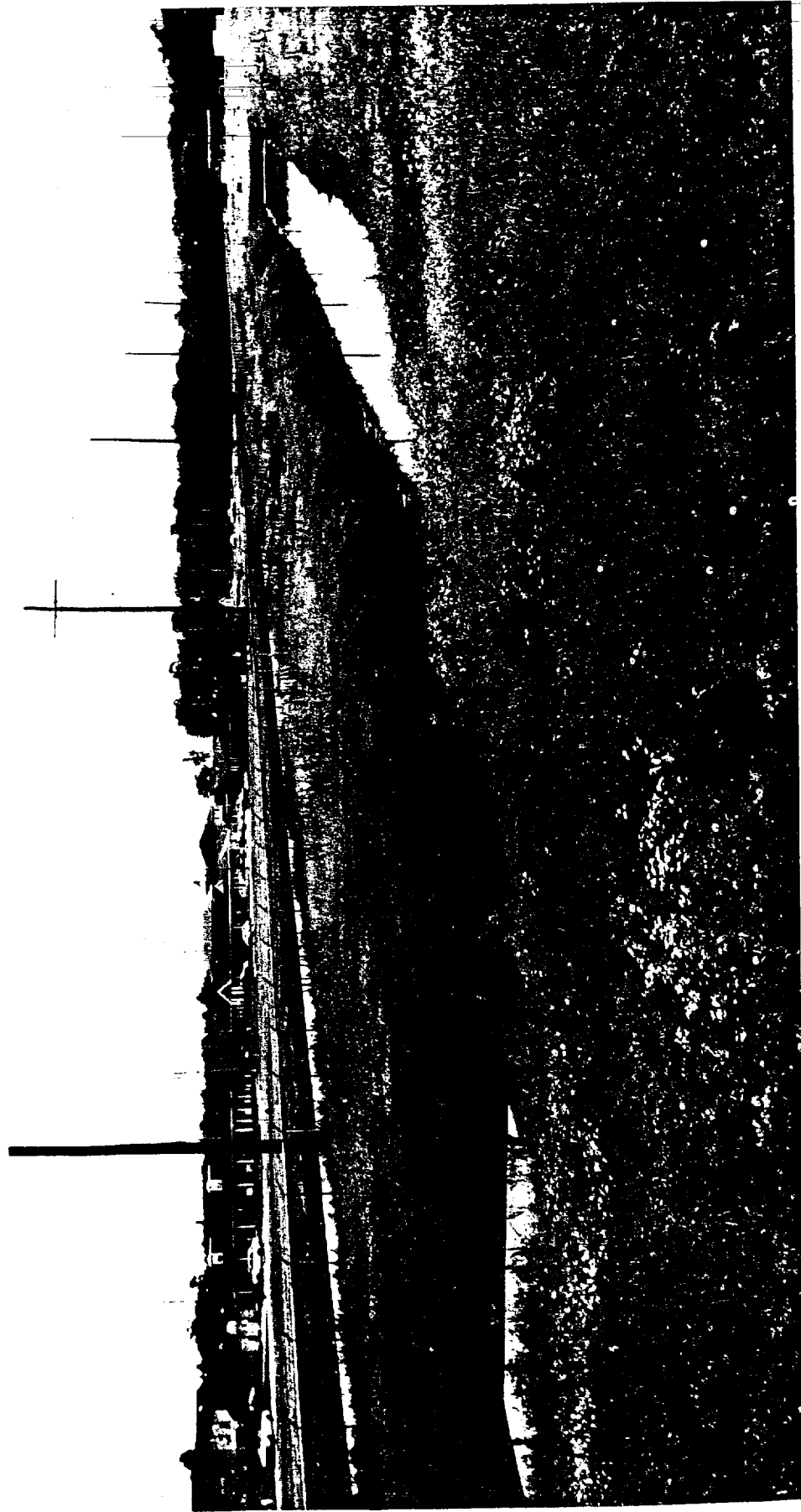
Villere Plantation (British Headquarters), detail from Latour's night battle of December 23.



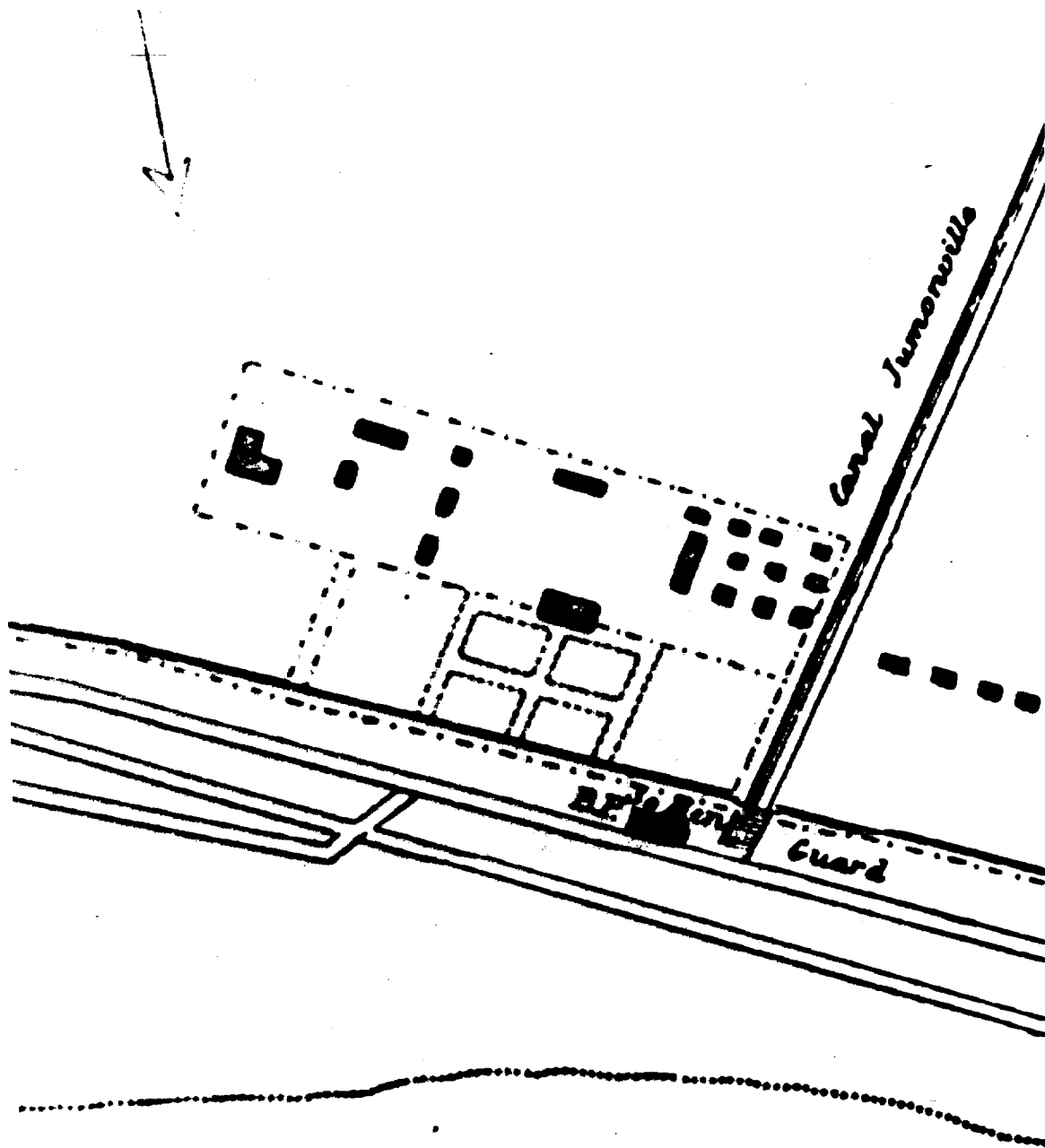
Villere Plantation House, engraving after sketch of April, 1861. Benson
J. Lossing, The Pictorial Field Book of the War of 1812, 1868.



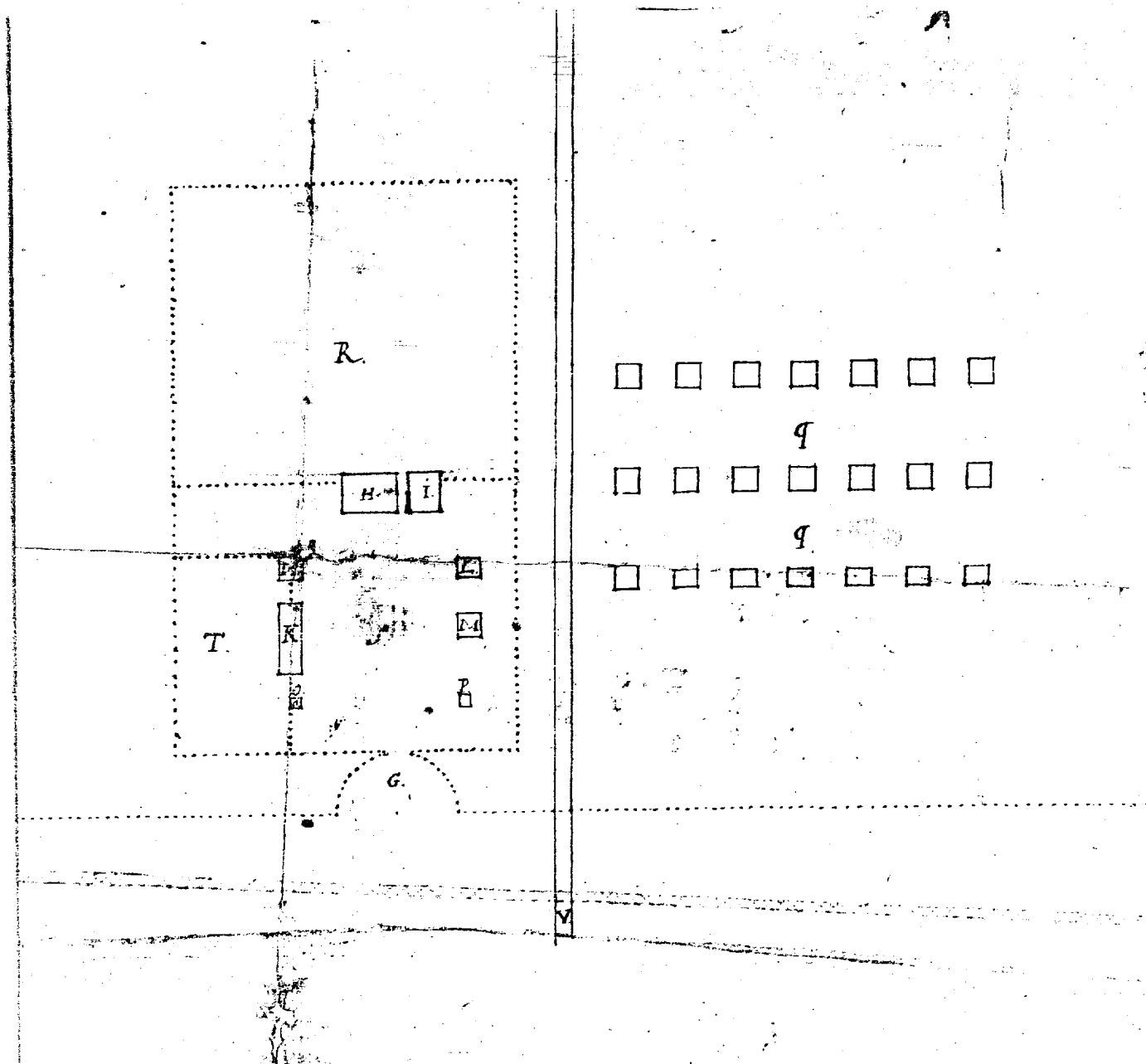
Dickson's journal sketch of the Villere Plantation with batteries cut into the levee, and the U.S.S. Carolina on the opposite side of the river.
 (Royal Artillery Institute, London)



Probable portion of Villere Canal,
north side of Judge Perez Drive,
Murphy Oil Co. property. Looking n.
Photo: B.Swanson, 3/1985.



Jumonville Plantation, detail of Latour's night battle of December 23.



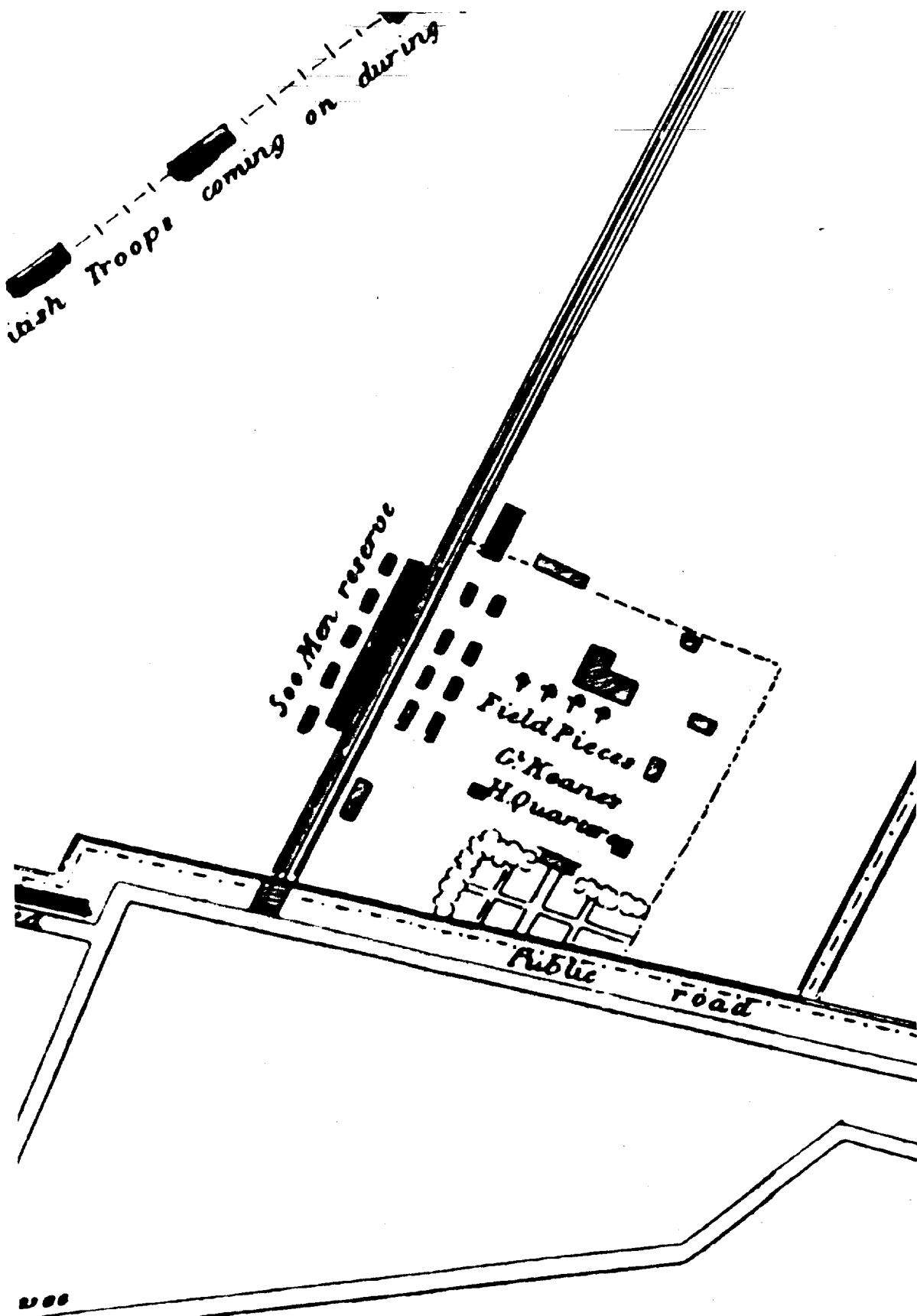
Plan of the Jumonville Plantation in 1768 showing position of buildings, canal, road and levee in relation to river. "Plan de l'habitation de M.Chabert....," by Pierre Francois Olivier, de Vezin, Royal Surveyor, assisted by Olivier de St.Maurice, attached to notarial acts of Felix de Armas, Book 26, Act 139, Jan.-Feb. 1830, Exchange of property Jumonville de Villiers to Simon Cucullu, New Orleans Notarial Archives.

[illegible]

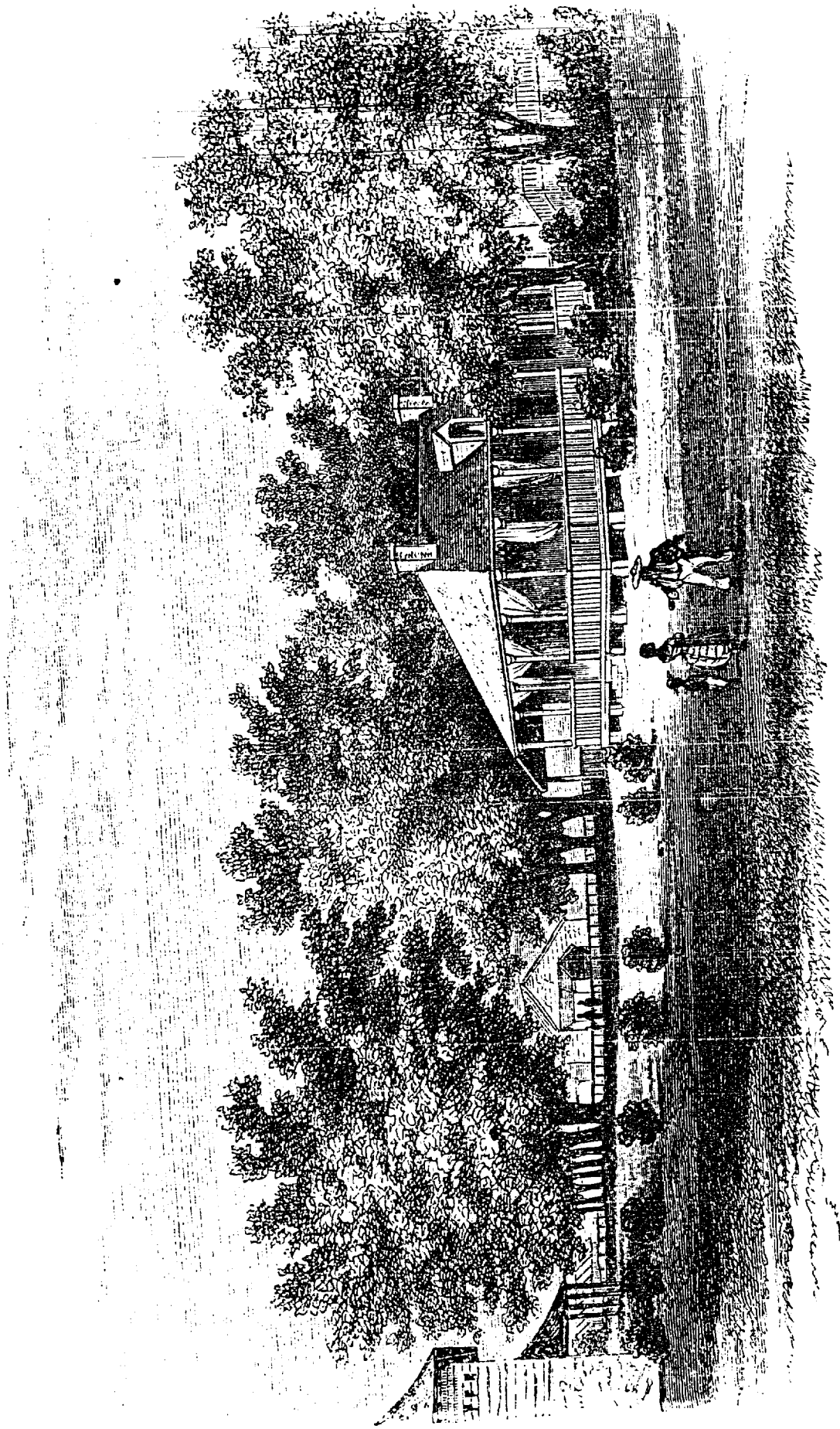
19 arguments
↔

107
St. Augustine en passant par les Lacs

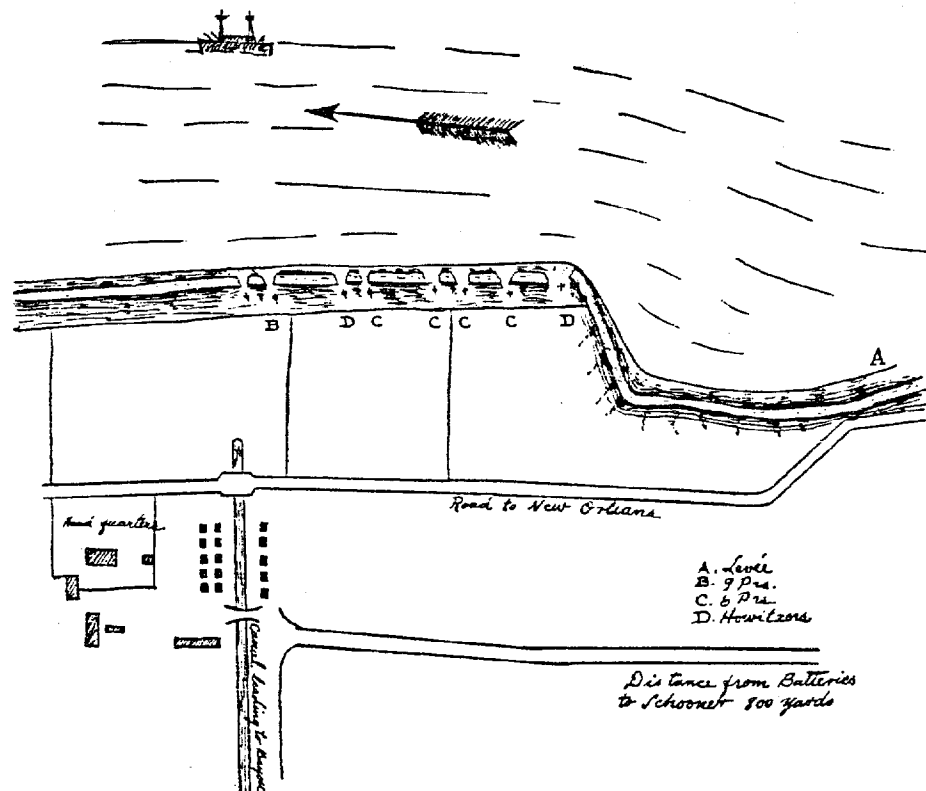
P P



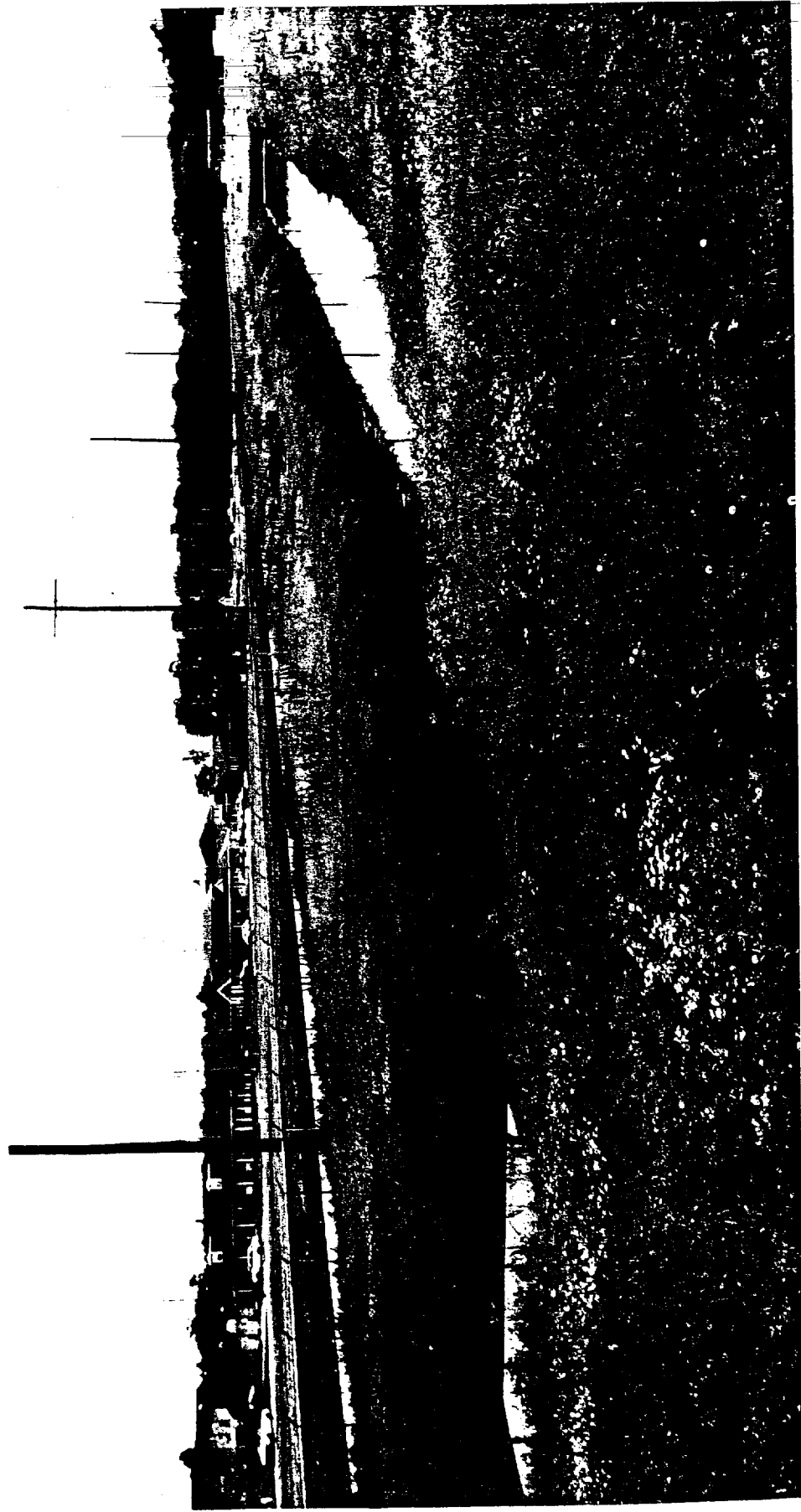
Villere Plantation (British Headquarters), detail from Latour's night battle of December 23.



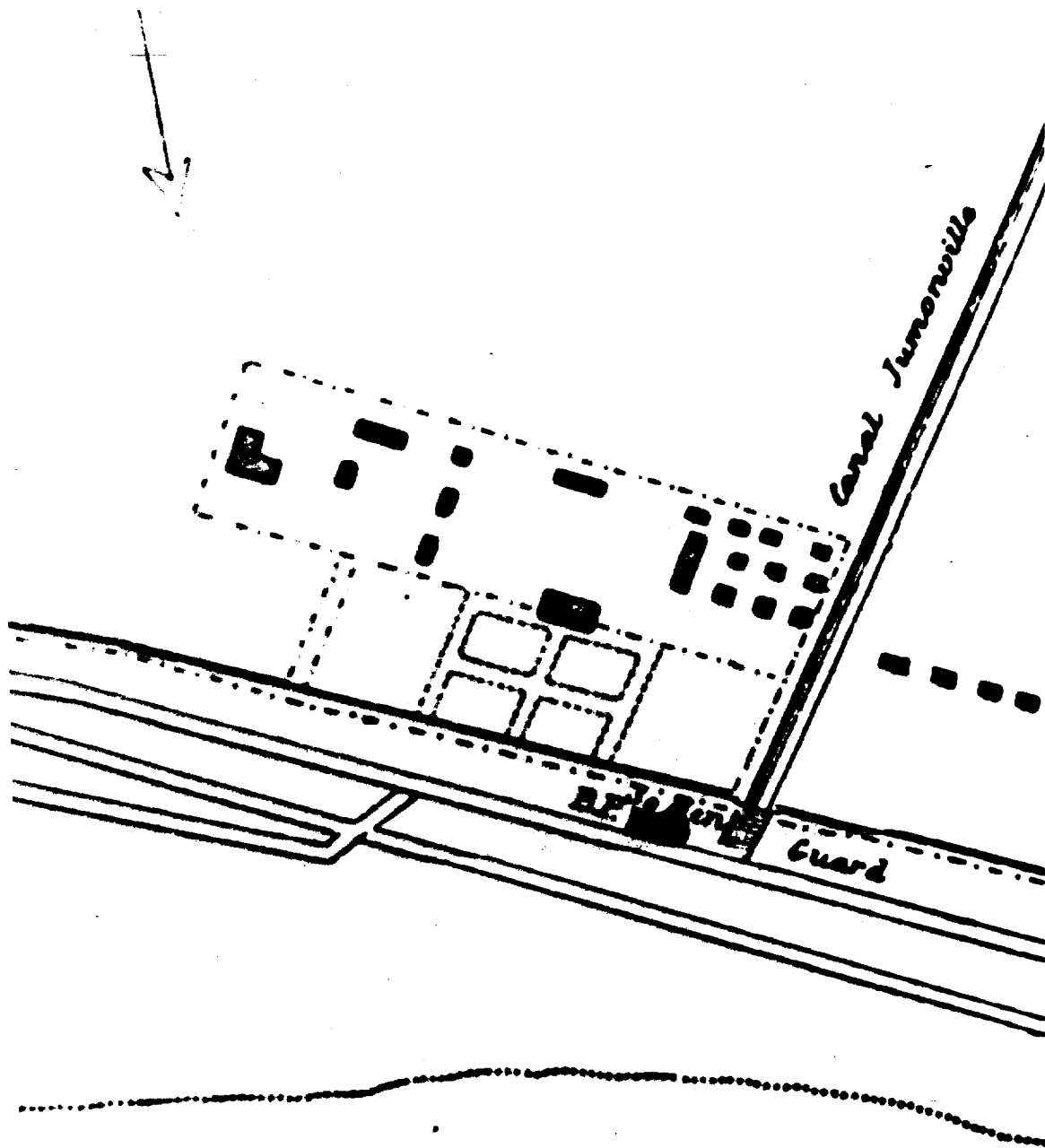
Villere Plantation House, engraving after sketch of April, 1861. Benson
J. Lossing, The Pictorial Field Book of the War of 1812, 1868.



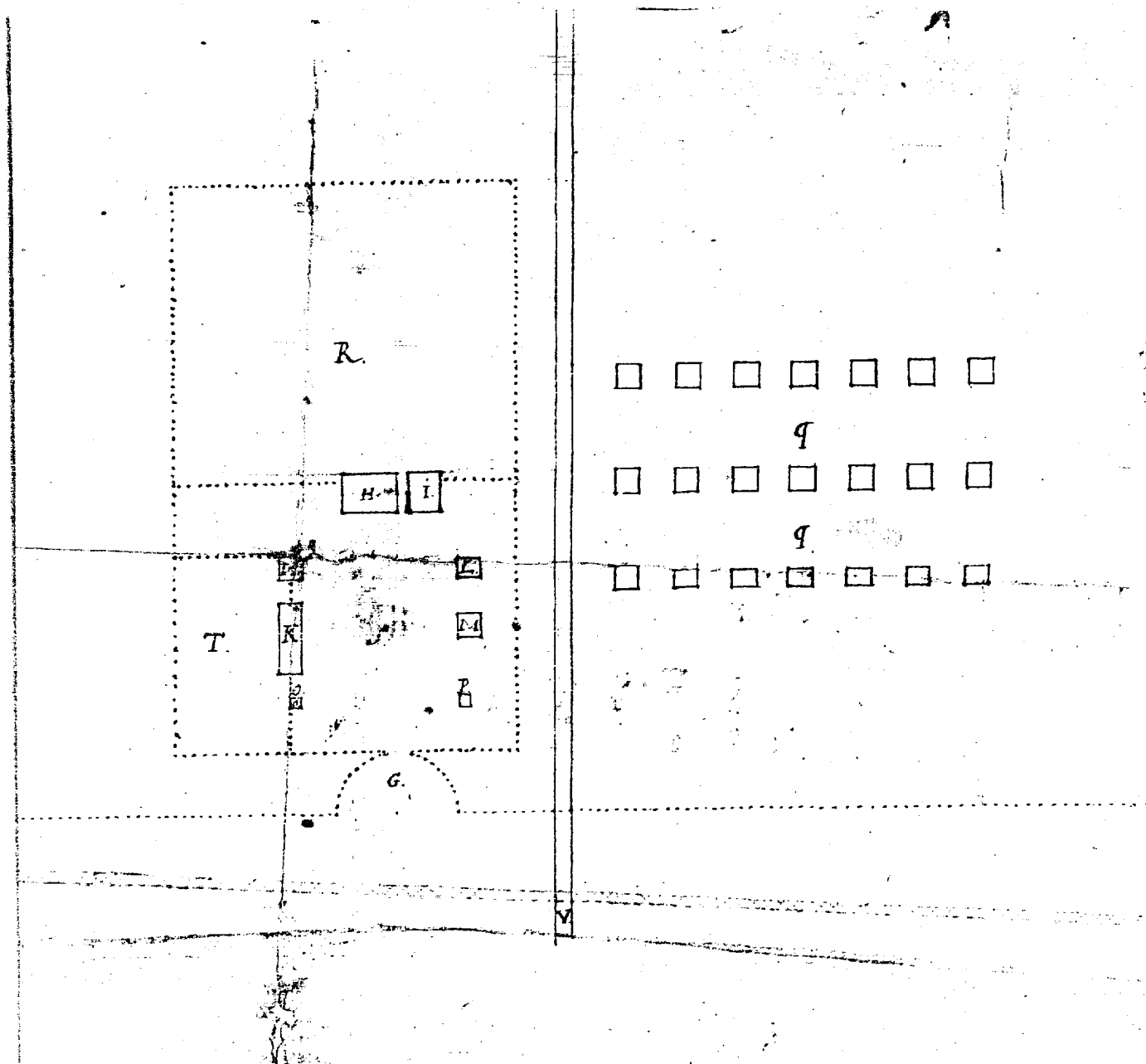
Dickson's journal sketch of the Villere Plantation with batteries cut into the levee, and the U.S.S. Carolina on the opposite side of the river.
(Royal Artillery Institute, London)



Probable portion of Villere Canal,
north side of Judge Perez Drive,
Murphy Oil Co. property. Looking n.
Photo: B.Swanson, 3/1985.



Jumonville Plantation, detail of Latour's night battle of December 23.



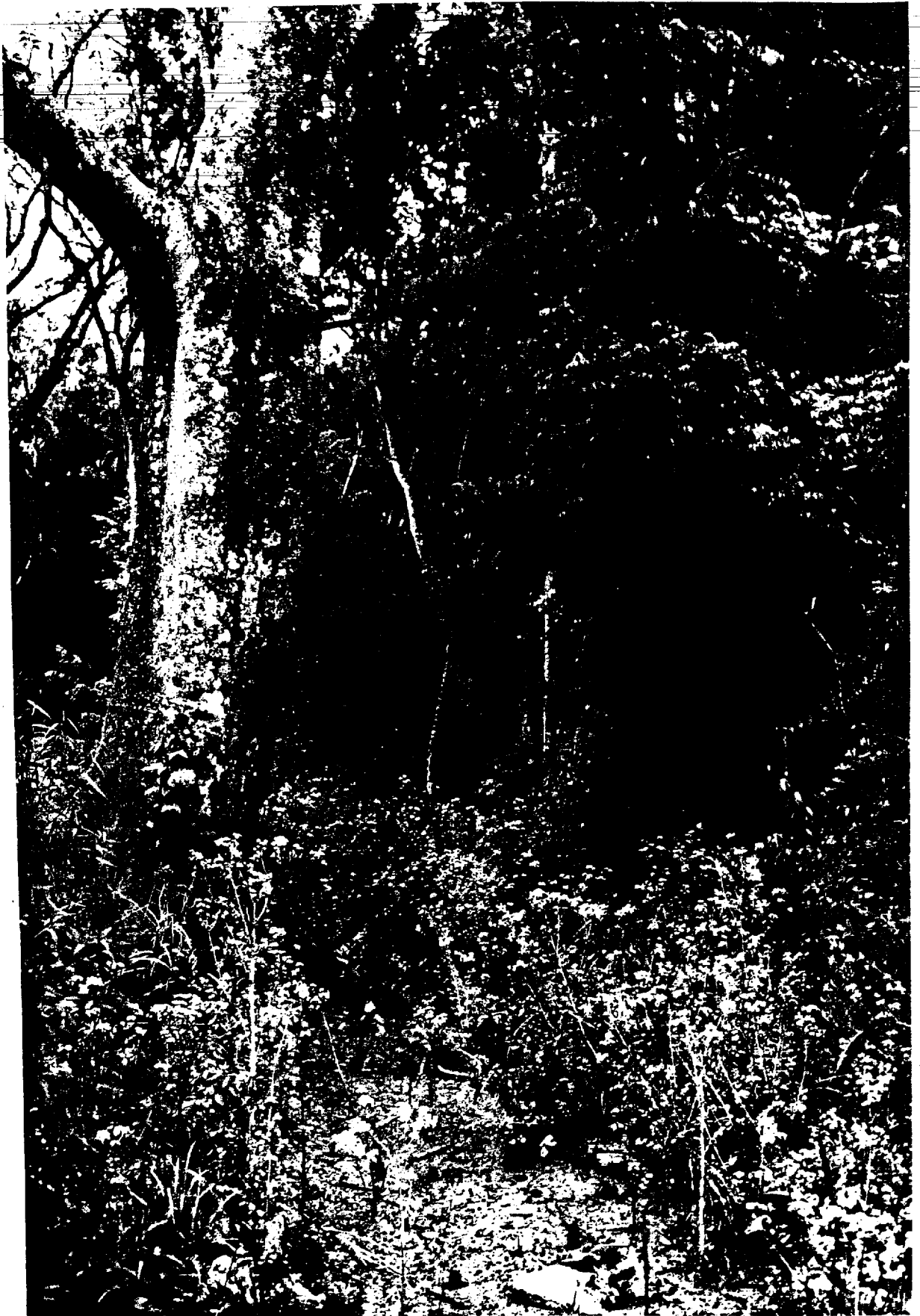
Plan of the Jumonville Plantation in 1768 showing position of buildings, canal, road and levee in relation to river. "Plan de l'habitation de M.Chabert....," by Pierre Francois Olivier, de Vezin, Royal Surveyor, assisted by Olivier de St.Maurice, attached to notarial acts of Felix de Armas, Book 26, Act 139, Jan.-Feb. 1830, Exchange of property Jumonville de Villiers to Simon Cucullu, New Orleans Notarial Archives.

1 arpent
10 arpens
19 arpents
sur laquelle on pourra passer les Lacs
un des cantons de la 14e s.p. de la...
P

19 arguments
↔

107
St. Augustine en pourra par les Lotes

P P



Jumonville Canal. Looking s.w.
Photo: B.Swanson, 3/1985.

By the time of the final British attack on January 8th, the British camp stretched for three miles along the bank of the river. The most advanced picket line of the camp was located on the lower Chalmet Plantation, as previously described. But the camp itself began on the Bienvenu Plantation. This forward portion of the camp was subject to constant bombardment from Patterson's guns on the West Bank, as was the front of the de La Ronde Plantation. A constant rain of cannon balls caused casualties, damaged buildings housing troops and supplies, and churned the ground wet with winter rains, contributing to the quagmire in which the British found themselves entrapped.

Continuing downriver, the British Camp occupied the de La Ronde, Lacoste, Villere and Jumonville Plantations. The headquarters of the camp was the Villere Plantation, upon which was located the canal that the British used to gain access to the river. However, the de La Ronde Plantation also functioned as British Headquarters, at the time of the battle of the 8th.

The Jumonville Plantation served as the British hospital. The downriver picket guard was stationed about three miles below the Jumonville Plantation on the Guichard and Philippon Plantations. However, the British foraged for miles beyond this point for cattle, horses and food stuffs, among the plantations at English Turn and among the farms and settlements of Bayou Terre aux Boeufs.

THE BIENVENU PLANTATION

The plantation of Antoine Bienvenu, acquired in 1794 and 1803, had a river frontage of 18 arpents. It contained a two-story brick dwelling house of 16 rooms, surrounded by a gallery, a brick sugar house and circular grinding mill, and numerous other outbuildings. The elegant furnishings of the house are recorded in British accounts (especially Hill, Vol. I, p.334).

"THE FOUR OAKS"

In the midst of the industrial setting of Kaiser Aluminum Plant, four old gnarled and unhealthy oak trees survive, marking the site of the Bienvenu house garden. These are traditionally said to be the famous "Four Oaks," visited by tourists in the 19th and early 20th century as the oaks to which General Pakenham was carried after falling on the field and under which he died. Actually, he was carried to the de La Ronde House and died there. It is possible that some archaeological sites may remain between or beneath the industrial structures on the former Bienvenu Plantation.

The buildings served as Colonel Thornton's Headquarters after being occupied by the British on December 30. An ammunition depot was established there. Breastworks were erected on the downriver side of the plantation on December 29 to protect the British camp from Patterson's fire. The British line of camp was established on the lower half of the

Bienvenu Plantation, after falling back from their advance of December 28. Several ship batteries were built along the levee front of the plantation.

Patterson's attempts to burn the Bienvenu house with hot shot failed, but he finally burned the slave cabins on January 5th. The rocket that signaled the British attack of January 8th was fired from the levee in front of the Bienvenu house.

Pointe St. Antoine was located on the Bienvenu Plantation (it was so named before purchase of the property by Antoine Bienvenu). This point has been eroded and the river has built out downstream, so that it is no longer evident. It is difficult to precisely locate the positions of the plantation buildings in relation to the former river bank. The building layout is derived from Dickson's journal sketch, Latour's large map, the post-battle maps of Zimpel (1834) and Springbett and Pilié (1839) and the landscaping shown in 1930s aerial photographs. There seems to be no knowledge or record of when the Bienvenu house disappeared.

THE DE LA RONDE PLANTATION

Downriver from the Bienvenu Plantation was the 15 arpent plantation owned by Colonel Pierre Denis de La Ronde.

THE DE LA RONDE PLANTATION HOUSE RUINS

The ruins of the two-story brick house stand in the middle of the St. Bernard Highway. Architectural historian Samuel Wilson, Jr. believes that the house closely resembles

in plan and detail the great French colonial house built on the same plantation by a former owner, the Chevalier Balthazar Ponfrac de Mazan, in 1750. If it is the same house, the walls represent one of the oldest surviving structural remains of colonial occupation in the Mississippi Valley.⁶

The ruins are the only structural remains surviving above ground, on either side of the river, of a building which stood on the battlefield. The house and the sites of the former garden, outbuildings and environs constitute one of the most significant locations associated with the British Invasion and the Battle of New Orleans.

Along with the downriver Lacoste Plantation, the de La Ronde Plantation was the site of the night battle of December 23rd, which is regarded by some historians as the truly decisive action of the British Invasion of Louisiana. After this battle, the plantation served as the American forward outpost occupied by Hinds' Mississippi Mounted Rifles, the Feliciana Dragoons and the Seventh U.S. Infantry Regiment. When the British advanced on December 28, the outposts fell back to the American line at the Rodriguez Canal.

Subsequently, the house served as General Gibbs' Headquarters from December 28 to January 8th. It became General Lambert's Headquarters from January 8 to January 18, when

6. Samuel Wilson, Jr., "The de La Ronde Plantation House (1805?)," Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians, XIII, 1, p.24-26.

the British retreated. During British occupation, an ammunition depot was established in the agricultural buildings of the plantation. The buildings also housed troops.

On January 8th, the de La Ronde House was converted into a hospital. "Almost every room was crowded with the wounded and dying," according to Hill. "I was the unwilling spectator of numerous amputations and on all sides nothing was heard but the piteous cries of my poor countrymen, undergoing various operations. The 93rd Regiment had suffered severely; and I cannot describe the strange and ghastly feelings created by seeing a basket nearly full of legs, severed from these fine fellows, most of which were still covered with their hose." (Vol. II, p.13-14).

General Pakenham was either dead or dying when carried onto the gallery of the de La Ronde House on January 8th, and General Gibbs died in the house on January 9th (Dickson, p.78). The bodies of Pakenham and Gibbs were returned to England, but the rest of the hospital dead were probably buried near the house; perhaps the officers were buried in the parterre garden.

Contrary to legend, the oak alley fronting the house was not planted until shortly after the Battle of New Orleans. The alley also extended from the rear of the house, just upriver from Montesquieu Street (Plan Book drawing, Book

92, folio 20, New Orleans Notarial Archives). A road existed here in 1814-15 (Dickson, p.85). This was probably the same road that is shown on British battle maps as continuing northward, paralleling present-day Paris Road. It ran along the center of the ridge of the crevasse beyond Bayou Lacoste (which joined with Bayou Mazant and was a route to Lake Borgne). The road is shown on British maps as leading to and across Bayou Bienvenu, through an area that is today sunken marshland.

Somewhere to the rear of the de La Ronde Plantation, British maps show a house and orchard. This was possibly the Casa Principal shown on a map of 1774 by Luis Andry (Sp. file #144, ff.19-21, Louisiana State Museum). An 1842 map shows several buildings located beyond Bayou Lacoste, about $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles from the river (National Archives, Dr. 133, Sht.23). It was unusual for buildings to be positioned so far from the river, but the high ridge of land and the navigable waterways made this a viable location for farming, fisheries activities, and perhaps commerce and smuggling. This study was not able to place the precise location of the buildings at the rear of the de La Ronde plantation, although they were undoubtedly used by the British. No possible location is given for such buildings on the maps with this study.

The de La Ronde Canal was located on the downriver plantation property line. It still exists today and still

bears the name of the

DE LA RONDE CANAL

Some British maps seem to show the canal reaching into the de La Ronde building complex. This is apparently in error. Latour's maps best show the situation of the canal. A "Projected Canal" is shown on Zimpel's 1834 map, running down Paris Avenue. This canal was never dug. It was planned in the 1830s as part of the "Versailles" subdivision of the plantation. Contrary to many published accounts of the Battle of New Orleans, the de La Ronde Plantation was NOT named Versailles at the time of the British invasion, nor was it ever so-called by the de La Ronde family.

The de La Ronde Canal played an important role in the British invasion. In a sense, it lured the British from Lake Borgne to the river bank. This route of access was revealed to the British by Spanish fishermen on Lake Borgne. The fishermen knew that, contrary to General Jackson's orders to all canal owners, neither de La Ronde nor Villere had blocked their canals with felled trees. Their disobedience probably reflected their estimation of the value of the water routes for travel and communication, commerce, and perhaps smuggling. Between December 15-19, 1814, Lt. John Peddie of the Quarter Master General's Department, reconnoitred Lake Borgne and Bayou Bienvenu with Captain Robert Spencer of the Royal Navy. They were guided by a fisherman up the de La Ronde Canal. At night, they penetrated

unobserved to the bank of the Mississippi, then returned to the British ships. Several days later, when barges containing the British troops ascended Bayou Bienvenu, they were not able to advance as far as the de La Ronde Canal. The water level had fallen. General Keane then decided to make their entrance to the river the Villere Canal, which the barges were able to reach, but which was a more difficult route through the swamp (Ewart, p.110-112).

FOUNDATIONS OF THE AGRICULTURAL BUILDINGS OF THE DE LA RONDE PLANTATION

Besides the standing house ruin, the building complex site contains important archaeological remains. In a small pasture area at the rear of the ruined house, bounded by Moreau, Fénélon, Grands Hommes, and Montesquieu Streets, are brick foundations of the sugarhouse and perhaps two other outbuildings. Their configurations are visible in the grass. The buildings were a center of much military activity. Their positions are clearly drawn on Latour's plan of the night battle of the December 23, and on later archival drawings illustrated with this report. They are also shown on Zimpel's 1834 map. Undoubtedly, there was much rebuilding on the plantation after the British invasion, and the later plans do not entirely reflect the 1814-15 buildings. One interesting feature not shown on Latour's plan and not mentioned in battle accounts, but shown on the later plans is a 100 foot long, rectangular fish pond in front of the sugar house. This

would be one of the archaeological remains in the pasture.

The oak alley ("The Pakenham Oaks") is one of the most scenic remaining in the State. Although the trees were not present during the night battle fought on the site, the land upon which they stand remains undeveloped. Traces of drainage ditches on either side of the trees may date back to the battle period. A careful search might reveal remains of ditches outlining the formal geometric parterre that fronted the house in 1814-15, as it is shown on Latour's map.

THE OLD LEVEES

The river has advanced 1500 feet from the 1814-15 levee in front of the de La Ronde House. Traces of this old levee, and an even older one further back from the river (shown on Latour's map as "Old Levee") are still evident as rises in the ground arching for more than two miles downriver, upward toward Judge Perez Drive.

The de La Ronde house ruin is located 3500 feet from the present river bank, but the ruin sits on an elevation about 10 feet high. This was near the center of the crevasse that created the elevated ridge the plantation occupied. However, 1930s aerial photographs appear to show that a levee line even older than the levees in front of the house ran through the house site. If so, this levee may have dated from a very early colonial period, and the rise in ground under the ruin may in part represent the old levee.

~~THE LACOSTE PLANTATION~~

The 16 arpent plantation downriver from the de La Ronde Plantation belonged to Major Pierre Robin Lacoste, who commanded a battalion of free-men-of-color during the Battle of New Orleans. The building said to have been the main dwelling house survived until the 1950s. It was located on the site of the High School, between Palmisano and Veronica Streets near Judge Perez Drive. The ground level with brick arches probably dated from the Spanish Colonial Period and the upper level was a late 19th century remodeling or reconstruction. The Lacoste House served as General Keane's Headquarters from the time of General Pakenham's arrival on Christmas Day until Keane fell wounded at the American lines on January 8th. General Pakenham slept at Lacoste's house the night of January 1st (Dickson, p.44-45).

At the time of the British invasion, there were slave cabins and other outbuildings to the rear of the house and upriver from the house. A hedge of orange trees and a high picket fence surrounded the house and three out buildings. Several oak trees of undetermined age survive at the High School. In 1814-15, the complex was fronted by the "Old Levee" and was about 2000 feet from the river bank. No trace remains of the structures, but some rises in the ground marking the course of the old levee are evident, especially at the corner of Palmisano and Ohio Streets.

Much fighting during the night battle of December 23rd took place in the vicinity of the Lacoste house. A surviving

feature of the battle is the probable remnant of the

LACOSTE CANAL

According to Latour's and Reid's plans of the night battle, the Lacoste Canal was one still evident on the downriver side of Plaza Street. Between Judge Perez Drive and the St. Bernard Highway (at which point the 1814-15 levee crossed the present route of the highway) the canal exists as a shallow, tree-lined depression about two feet deep. North of Judge Perez Drive, the canal passes through an underground culvert in a residential neighborhood.

British maps show the Lacoste Canal as curving bayou-like from Bayou Lacoste and reaching into the building complex between the main dwelling house and the slave quarters. The same delineation is shown on Zimpel's 1834 map, as well as on an undated archival plan (Book 92, folio 17, New Orleans Notarial Archives). No surviving traces of this canal were located in field survey.

Yet another canal or drainage ditch existed along the lower boundary line of the Lacoste Plantation. This seems not to have been the nearby present-day Corinne Canal which seems to have been dug later in the 19th century on the Villere Plantation. The ditch along the lower Lacoste property line apparently bordered present-day Volpe Street but no traces of it were located in field survey. The 1967 Chalmette quadrangle map shows a portion of a waterway in the marsh across the Forty Arpent Canal from Volpe Street. This

could also be a remnant of the curving canal shown on Zimpel's map that extended into the building complex.

The Lacoste Canal figured in military actions and is mentioned in various accounts. It is difficult to resolve the differences in the placement of the canal. One explanation could be that the several canals or large draingage ditches actually existed and that there was confusion in their identification on the battle maps and in the accounts.

Latour's and Reid's maps of the December 23rd night battle show the canal downriver from Plaza Street as the one upon which Hind's Mississippi Horse Troop reserve was stationed. Since their horses could not be used at night, the 118 men and horses waited through the darkness of the battle on the upriver bank of the canal, near the cypress wood. The place where they stood is today a subdivision of "ranch-style" houses between Plaza and Dauterive Streets, at the crossing of East Genie Street. General Coffee's riflemen dismounted just upriver at the de La Ronde Canal, near East Josephine Street, and advanced on foot leaving two companies to hold their horses.

The canal between Plaza and Dauterive Streets served as the British picket line of their camp between December 24-28. Adjacent to the downriver side of the canal, a house that was located between Plaza and Octavia Streets at Gem Street, and a barn that was just above the house at Jewel

~~Street, together functioned as the advanced guard post~~
between December 24-28.

On January 17, Colonel Dickson and Major Munro traveled in a canoe from Bayou Mazant down the Lacoste Canal in search of a route of exit for their cannon. They found that, unlike his neighbors de La Ronde and Villere, Major Lacoste had obeyed Jackson's orders and blocked his canal with felled trees. Dickson and Munro then abandoned the idea of using the Lacoste Canal as a route of retreat. Whether this canal was the one between Plaza and Dauterive Streets, or one slightly further downriver, remains uncertain. (Dickson, p.85)

THE BRITISH BREASTWORK ON THE LACOSTE PLANTATION

Dickson wrote in his journal that on December 26th, he accompanied Sir Edward Pakenham to their advance at the Lacoste house where Colonel Thornton had "thrown up works and made his position...very strong" (p.14). Latour described the breastwork's location: "The enemy...cut up the road by an epaulment with a ditch on the boundary line between Lacoste's and Laronde's, at the distance of one hundred yards towards his encampment, and at the back of the levee, opposite the sloop of war, the Louisiana, which was at anchor near the right bank." (p.114)

This location is just below the point where the 1814-15 road and levee crosses the present-day railroad tracks and the St. Bernard Highway, on the river side of the highway,

about 200 feet below the intersection of Marietta Street with the highway. A field check did not reveal signs of an earthwork, but some remains could exist in an overgrown area behind buildings fronting the highway.

Due to the meander shift of the river, the position of the U.S.S. Louisiana, when moored to the West Bank from December 24 to December 27, 1814, was approximately at the edge of today's East Bank, near Water Board Road.

THE VILLERE PLANTATION

The 19-arpent Villere Plantation contained two separate plantation building complexes. The lower complex served as British headquarters. The upper complex consisted of a small plantation house in a formal garden with several outbuildings. Located near the lower boundary of the Lacoste plantation, these had been the buildings of the five-arpent Norbert Boudousquie Plantation. Shortly before the Battle of New Orleans, the Boudousquie Plantation had been purchased by adjacent downriver property owner Jacques Philippe Villere.

No illustrations or descriptions are known to survive of the former Boudousquie House, and no traces remain of the structure. It was located on the "Old Levee" 1500 feet from the 1814-15 river bank and three quarters of a mile from the present river bank. It's approximate site was near the river side of Judge Perez Drive, between Mumphrey and Charles Streets. It is shown on Zimpel's 1834 map, but is not shown on late 19th century maps.

The house served as the British hospital between December 24-26. In his journal, Dickson described a visit to the house on December 26 with Sir Edward Pakenham. "Between Colonel Thornton's post and Headquarters there is a house that has been used by us as an Hospital, and it being situated in the line of fire of the Schooner in case she returns that of our Battery, it has been thought proper to remove the wounded from it, which the Schooner observing she opened a brisk fire upon the house, and also around Headquarters....Sir Edward was extremely enraged at this firing upon our wounded...." (p.15)

The house served as General Lambert's Headquarters from the time of his arrival on January 3 until the battle of January 8 when he assumed command and made the de La Ronde House his headquarters.

CARRONADE BATTERY

A battery was built on the 1814-15 road and levee in front of the upper Villere Plantation house on January 6 for two-24 pounder carronades. The present-day location is at a bend in Ohio Street. A rise in the land along Ohio Street represents a remaining trace of the levee and battery location.

~~SITE OF BATTERY ERECTED TO DESTROY THE U.S.S.~~~~CAROLINA~~

In order to silence the fire of the Carolina, which had been causing destruction and death in the British camp, Colonel Dickson ordered a nine-gun battery to be built on December 25-26. Embrasures were cut in the levee in front of the Villere Plantation building complex, at a point where the bank and levee bent outward into the river. The ground was levelled and a few pieces of paling laid across as platforms. The levee was only high enough to cover the artillery men to the breast. (Dickson, p.10) The distance from the guns to the schooner Carolina was 800 yards (as noted on Dickson's sketch of the batteries and Villere Plantation).

During the early morning hours of December 27, hot shot was prepared, and at the first light the British opened fire on the ship. The sailors were unable to move the vessel upriver and the hot shot soon ignited a fire in the hull of the ship (Dickson, p.17).

The Carolina was moored to the West Bank of the river. According to Dickson, "she lay quite close, indeed her sides must have been nearly touching the logs that are cast up on the bank.... The smoke increased, forming a mass nearly over the whole Hull, and at last at half past ten she blew up abaft, and the Masts and Hull fell outwards into deep water and disappeared." (p.1718) The battery also fired on the U.S.S. Louisiana, moored further upriver, but this ship warped

~~upriver out of range of the guns and continued to provide~~
valuable service to the American defense by providing a
raking fire across the battlefield in front of Jackson's
line at the Rodriguez Canal.

Hill also gave a detailed description of the destruction of the Carolina:

At daybreak, on the 27th, the schooner was observed to be in the same position she had occupied, close in-shore on the opposite side of the river; the range being carefully calculated, the guns, loaded with red-hot shot, commenced a rapid fire upon her; the two first drove her crew to their boats, abandoning her to the fate which appeared inevitable, the third struck her aft, and it was soon obvious that this shot had taken the desired effect, a thick smoke was seen to issue from the hole it had made in her side. To make assurance doubly sure, several guns were fired, and it was now apparent that she was completely on fire. Not a human creature was visible on board; but a large cock was perceived to move from one spar to another, instinctively avoiding the progress of the flames, and occasionally crowing loudly, as he imagined he had found a place of safety. The devouring element soon consumed her rigging, her masts began to totter, and ultimately fell over side, marking their descent by a shower of brilliant sparks. The powder magazine was at last reached, and the vessel blew up with a loud explosion, her guns discharging at the same moment, and tumbling with heavy plunges into the river. (Vol. I, p.327-328)

Due to the meander shift of the river, the position of the Carolina when blown up while moored to the West Bank is now approximately at the edge of the East Bank, in front of the oil refinery that now occupies the site of the Villere Plantation. The position of the site of the ship battery is 300 yards from the present-day river bank, the river having moved at this point a distance equal to its width.

The battery stretched for about 1600 feet. The upriver end began at the foot of Campagna Street. Here the levee made a sharp pointed bend in 1814. Some open, grassy land in this area may contain some vestiges of the batteries. Further downriver, the position of the levee-battery runs through a new housing subdivision and into the oil plant.

Since the Carolina blew up and the entire 2000 foot width and 140 foot depth of the river has completely passed over the position where it was moored, it is not possible that there could be recoverable remains of the ship.

THE VILLERE PLANTATION BUILDING COMPLEX

(BRITISH HEADQUARTERS)

No structures survive amid the oil tanks that now occupy the portion of the Villere Plantation that served as British headquarters. Local tradition maintains that a brick wall still stands amid the tanks, but a field survey was not conducted in the property of the oil company. Aerial photographs clearly show that there are no significant above-ground remains, nor noticable traces of foundations. Yet the site could still contain valuable archaeological information.

The building complex served as British headquarters from the moment of the arrival of the British on the morning of December 23rd, when they captured Major Gabriel Villere's Guard. Villere escaped and was one of the several individuals who brought word of the arrival of the British to Jackson in New Orleans.

The main dwelling house served as General Keane's Headquarters until it was occupied as such by General Pakenham when he arrived on Christmas Day. Being at the head of the canal by which the British gained entry to the river bank, an ammunition depot was established at the rear of the building complex.

The Villere Plantation was named "Conseil." The main house was a one-story dwelling with a hipped roof and gallery. It was fronted by a formal garden. At the rear was an orange orchard, sugar house, slave cabins and other outbuildings. Its canal ran through the rows of slave cabins.

THE VILLERE CANAL

Sections of the canal which served as the British route of entry and retreat survive. Parts of Bayou Villere and the Villere Canal exist in the marsh above the Forty Arpent Canal. The position of the canal is marked by an old drainage machine on the Forty Arpent Canal bank. The Villere Canal then snakes through a swamp toward the river, on the upriver side of the Meraux Canal. Artifacts of the British invasion are said to have been dug out of the canal in this area.

In 1814, a bridge was located near the Twenty Arpent Canal. A road followed the downriver side of the canal and crossed the bridge at this point. Here also was a small grove of oaks. Several old, sick oaks at this site are survivors of the grove.

~~A small portion of the canal is visible on the north side of Judge Perez Drive, within the oil refinery property, downriver from a private drive that is downriver from Jacob Street. About 800 feet of canal may also still exist as a drainage ditch on the river side of Judge Perez Drive within the refinery property.~~

Between January 2-7, 1815, a 3000 foot stretch of the Villere Canal from approximately the present-day Twenty Arpent Canal to 800 feet south of Judge Perez Drive was widened and deepened by the British in order that boats might be brought in from Lake Borgne to take troops across the Mississippi River (Dickson, p.47; Cooke, p.213).

No trace appears to remain in the middle of the refinery of a 300 foot cut the British made from the 1814-15 road (which in front of the Villere buildings followed the "Old Levee"), through the batture and a second levee. This cut angled sharply downriver, perhaps so that the flow of water into the canal could be better controlled. (Cooke, p.246; Dickson's large battle map and other British maps.)

The canal work failed; the walls caved in; a dam behind the boats lined up in the canal broke. With super-human effort, British sailors and soldiers began to drag the boats over the mud of the batture cut on the night of January 7-8. Delay in getting the boats in the river caused delay in delivering troops to the West Bank, which disrupted the timing of the attacks on the two sides of the river on January 8th. The delay has been blamed as a chief reason for British

defeat. Because of the strategic role it played, the Villere Canal remnants are among the most important surviving physical features of the Battle of New Orleans.

The British used the Villere Canal and a road they constructed of reeds along its border as their retreat route on January 18-19. Lt. John Peddie, the first man to enter to the Mississippi River prior to the army's invasion, was the last man out. He and his party followed the rear guard and destroyed bridges as they went.

THE JUMONVILLE PLANTATION

The last plantation of the British camp, and the last East Bank plantation below New Orleans involved in battle actions, was the Jumonville Plantation, owned by Charles Coulon Jumonville de Villiers. It stretched for nearly 20 arpents along the river. The building complex consisted of a main dwelling house fronted by a parterre garden, brick sugar house, slave cabins, kitchen, stables, and other out buildings. No descriptions or illustrations of the appearance of the buildings have been found, but several plans of the building layout exist. There are no structural remains, although most of the building complex site remains in a wooded, undeveloped area which was for many years plowed fields. It could be an interesting archaeological site.

THE JUMONVILLE CANAL

The plantation canal ran from Bayou Jumonville (which joined with Bayou Mazant) into the building complex. The canal still exists as a ditch just upriver from the newly

constructed Cypress Point Shopping Center, on the river side of Judge Perez Drive.

at the time of the arrival of the British on December 23rd, a detachment of Colonel de La Ronde's Louisiana Militia was stationed on the Jumonville Plantation. They withdrew downriver at the approach of the British who immediately occupied the plantation. (Latour, p.87) Attached to this militia unit was a dragoon named Augustin Rousseau who, on this day, was to become Chalmette's Paul Revere.

Rousseau was riding on the River Road in front of the Villere Plantation when he glimpsed the British emerging from the cypress swamp. In a letter to the Editor of the Louisiana Courier he explained:

As I was passing along at the time, I made all haste to give information to Mr. Ducros, who was posted on Mr. Jumonville's plantation. Captain Ducros said to me, 'As you are on horseback, go to the city and let General Jackson know that the English are on Villere's plantation.' I set out immediately, and passed, in spite of the efforts of the English to stop me. I reached Mr. Bienvenu's plantation; my horse being unable to go any further, Mr. Bienvenu prepared for me the horse of a dragoon who was sick in bed at his house, and I went to General Jackson's quarters in the city and gave him the news. A few minutes afterwards, three discharges of cannon gave the alarm, and drums beat to arms through the streets....

Rousseau's letter to the editor was reprinted by Alexander Walker in his book Jackson and New Orleans, published in 1856 (p.151). At that date, the controversy continued as to who had been the first to bring the word to Jackson at his Royal Street headquarters. Major Gabriel

~~Villere and Colonel Pierre Denis de La Ronde~~ (both of whom it will be remembered had not followed orders and blocked their canals with felled trees) made the claim that they were the first to bring Jackson the news. They claimed to have escaped from the British, crossed the river, obtained horses, ridden up the bank opposite New Orleans, and crossed the river again to reach Jackson. Obviously, Rousseau's route was more direct and he was probably the first to reach Jackson. The Engineers Tatum and Latour, who had been sent by Jackson that morning on a reconnaissance down the river bank, probably also returned to the General at about the same time. (Latour, p.88; Tatum, p.107)

In anycase, the story of Augustin Rousseau's dramatic ride through the British making camp on Villere's Plantation and along the River Road is given as an example of the kind of activity that can be precisely plotted with the topographical information supplied in this study. He galloped through what are now oil storage tanks where Villere's house stood, and through block after block of subdivision houses and streets, across the St. Bernard Highway and the railroad tracks, through the blazing machinery of another refinery, and halted his spent horse amid the huge metal structures of the aluminum plant where Bienvenu's house stood. Continuing his ride with a fresh horse, he galloped up the River Road where the Mississippi River now flows, past the Chalmette National Historical Park.

~~The British made the buildings of the Jumonville~~
Plantation their hospital. It was also the station of
the black West India troops who were suffering severely
from the cold, not being warmly dressed.

On the night of December 25, Jackson ordered Major
Barthélémy Lafon, engineer attached to General Morgan on
the West Bank, to cut the levee below Jumonville's and
flood the plain below the British camp. At the same time,
Latour cut the levee in front of the American lines and
flooded the plain in front of the British camp. Both cuts
were effective; the flood lasted for days. The location
of Lafon's cut can be identified as approximately at Paul
Street, the central street of a new housing subdivision,
between First and Cypress Streets. The cut was made 150
or 200 yards below the bridge over the Jumonville Canal
where an unaware British picket guard was stationed.
(Latour, p.117-118; Tatum, p.112; Dickson, p.11) Old
aerial photographs show a fan-shaped discoloration on the
ground on the site of the present subdivision.

THE BATTLEGROUND OF THE NIGHT BATTLE OF DECEMBER 23

The battleground of ~~of~~ the night battle of December
23rd stretched along the river bank for three miles, from
present-day Stander Street (the road on the upriver property
line of the de La Ronde Plantation and its principal avenue
of entrance from the river road) to approximately Olivia
Street in Meraux. Toward the center of this battleground, the

military actions encompassed the ground between the river and the swamp, a distance of about a mile and a half.

The maps with this study reconstruct the positions of the troop movements. Of particular interest is the 1814 position of the U.S.S. Carolina and the two gunboats that fired on the British camp: about 500 feet north of the St. Bernard Highway in a residential subdivision between Volpe and Barcelona Streets. The site of the British camp was north of the position of the boats, in the vicinity of Ohio Street.

The British advance guard, Captain Hallen's 95th Rifles, who bravely held off Jackson's attack, were stationed between Plaza and Octavia Streets, about 200 feet north of the St. Bernard Highway. General Jackson advanced with the artillery along the River Road through what are now oil refinery tanks. However, his route took him across the spot where the lower end of the "Pakenham Oaks" now grow.

Beales New Orleans Rifle Company stumbled into the British Camp, where many were captured, wounded or killed. Descriptions of their route would place them on the river side of Judge Perez Drive, near Gallo Street (especially, the "Diary of Captain Benjamin Story," Special Collections Division, Tulane University Library.)

Military historians frequently rate the significance of the night battle as nearly equal to that of January 8th in determining the outcome of victory for the Americans and defeat for the British. It is regarded as an example of

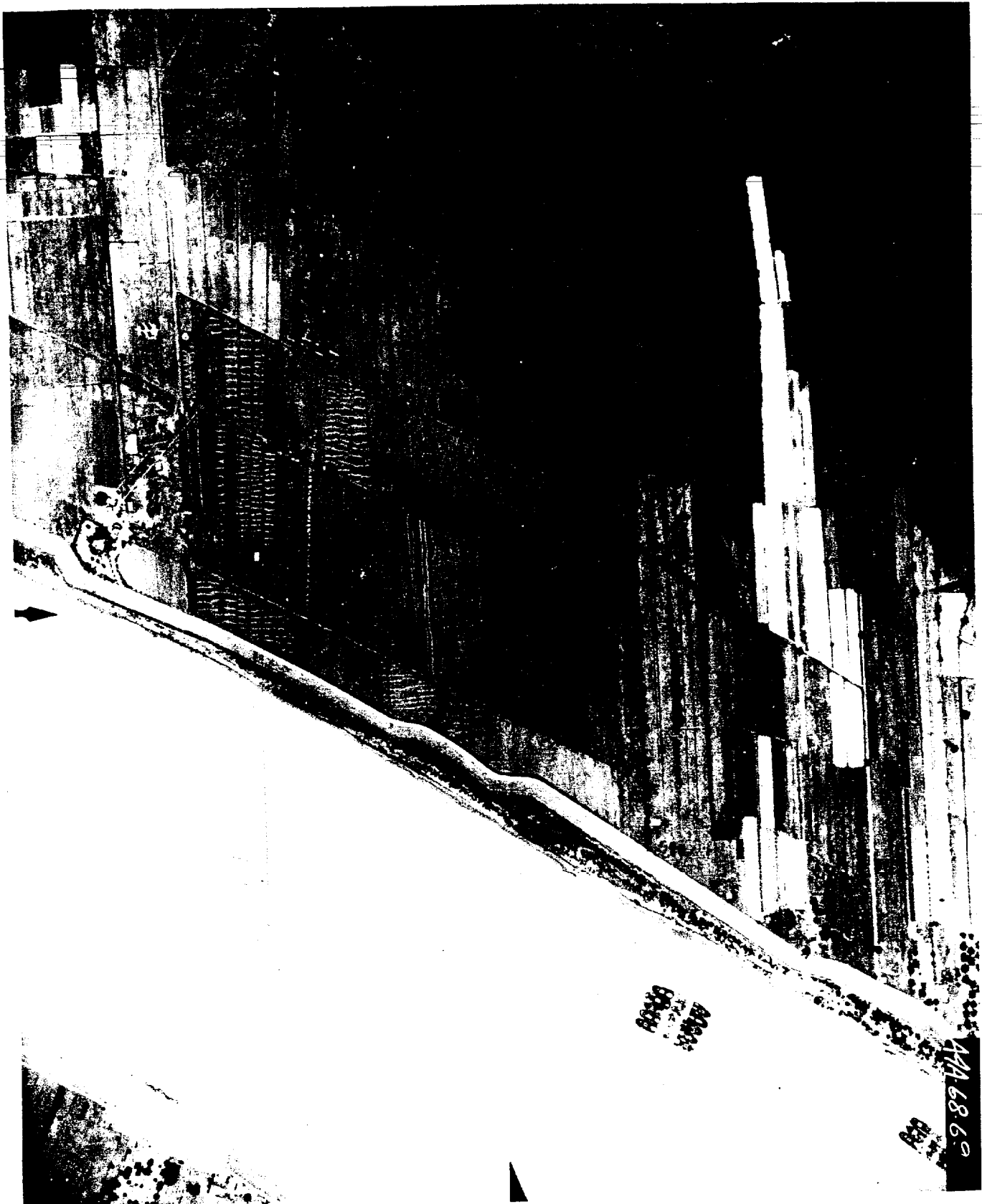
Andrew Jackson's outstanding ability as a military leader and battle strategist.

POSSIBLE BRITISH BURIAL GROUNDS ON THE EAST BANK

Birkedal and Greene place the principal mass burial sites of January 8th on the sites of the batteries on the battlefield. Since ground water was a few inches below the surface, the soil from the batteries would have provided cover for the shallow graves. Batteries further downriver may also have provided burial sites. Some injured were carried to the protection of the redoubts where some died (Hill, Vol. II, p.12).

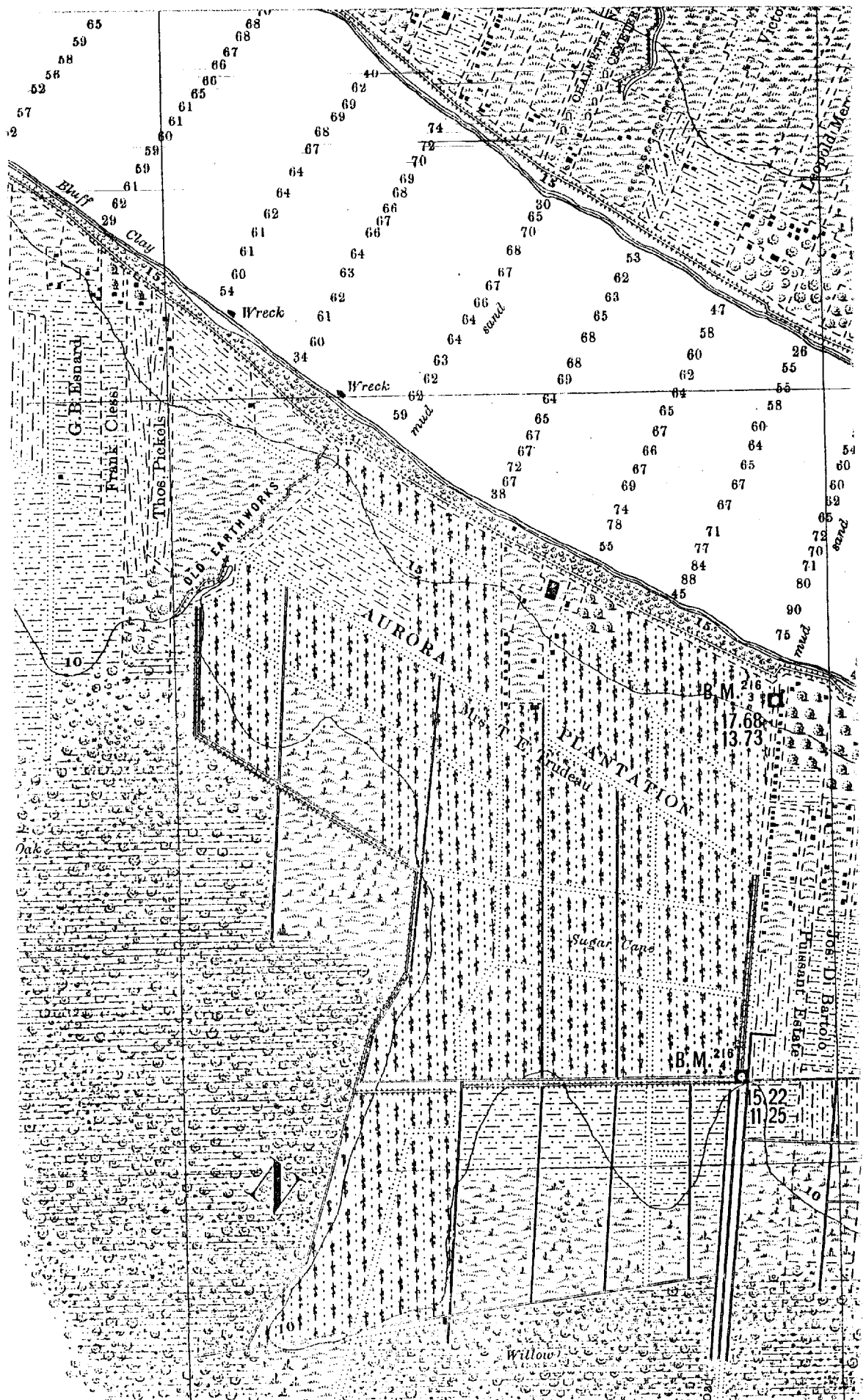
The gardens of the plantation houses were attractive burial sites, according to British accounts. Those houses which served as hospitals were probably burial locations: the de La Ronde, both Villere houses, and the Jumonville (Gleig, p.303; Hill, Vol. II, p.5). One documented burial site was located in the late 19th century when the Meraux Canal was dug on the lower side of the Villere plantation building complex. Bones and belt buckles were exhumed, and the ditch was called the "Ditch of Death." (Daily Picayune, 1/18/1891.)

THE BATTLE GROUND OF THE WEST BANK

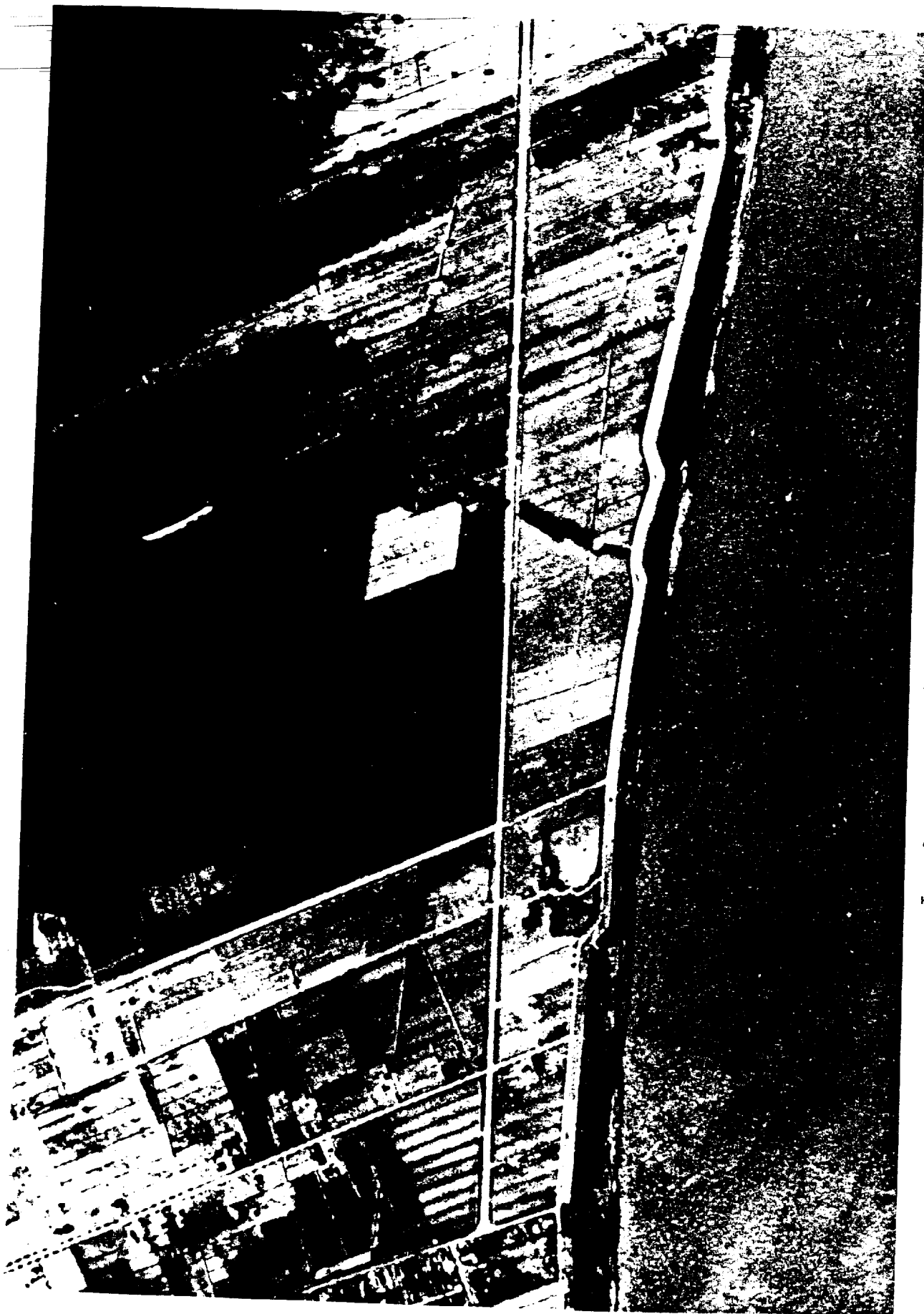


Jourdan and Cazelard Plantations.
Site of the battle on the West Bank.

Sept. 5, 1933. 1:20,000.
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.



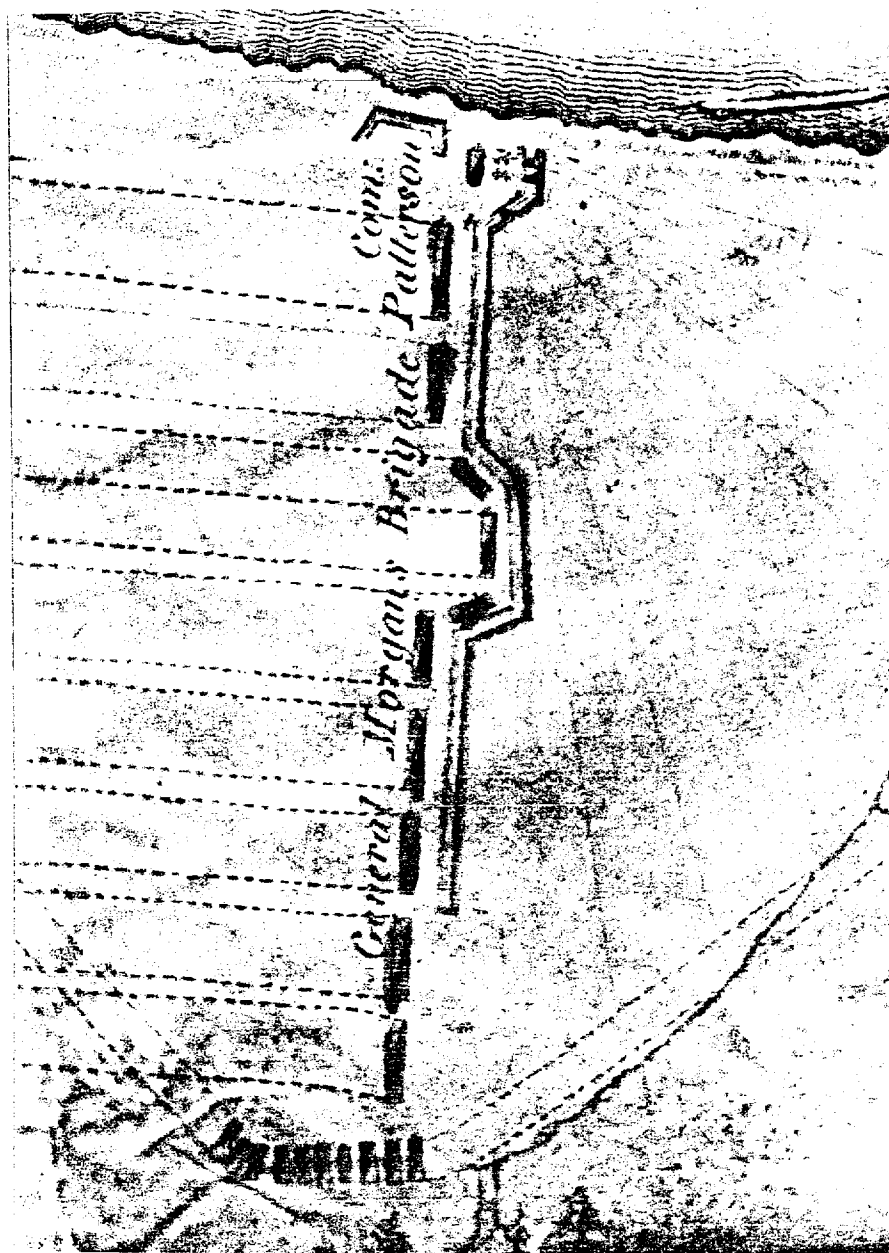
Mississippi River Commission, Sheet 76, detail showing area of
 Battle of the West Bank, 1874 updated 1894. (Louisiana Collection,
 Tulane University Library, New Orleans)



Jourdan and Cazeland Plantations.
Site of battle on the West Bank. 11/2/50



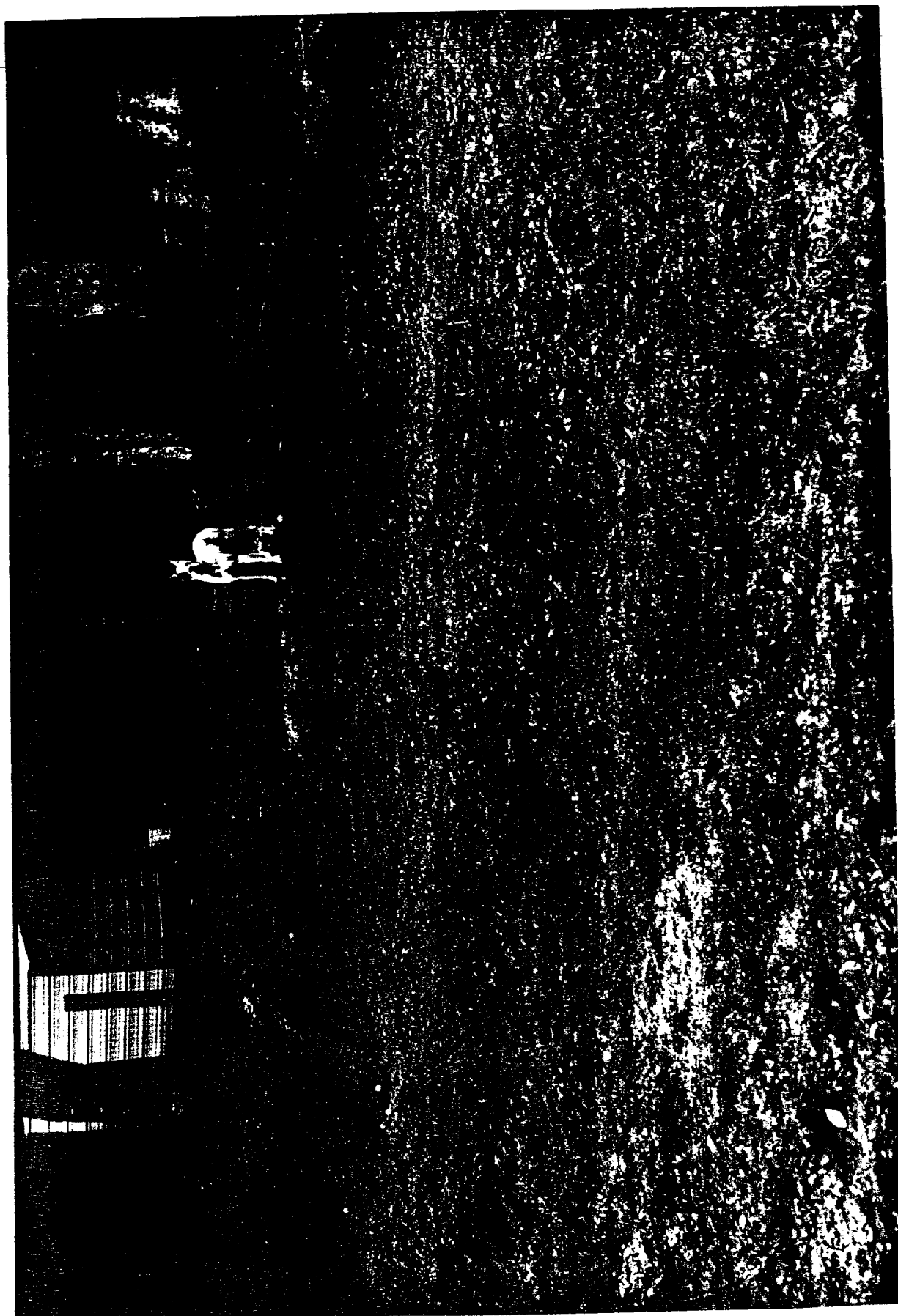
Probable site of Morgan Line on
Jourdan Plantation. 11/2/50.



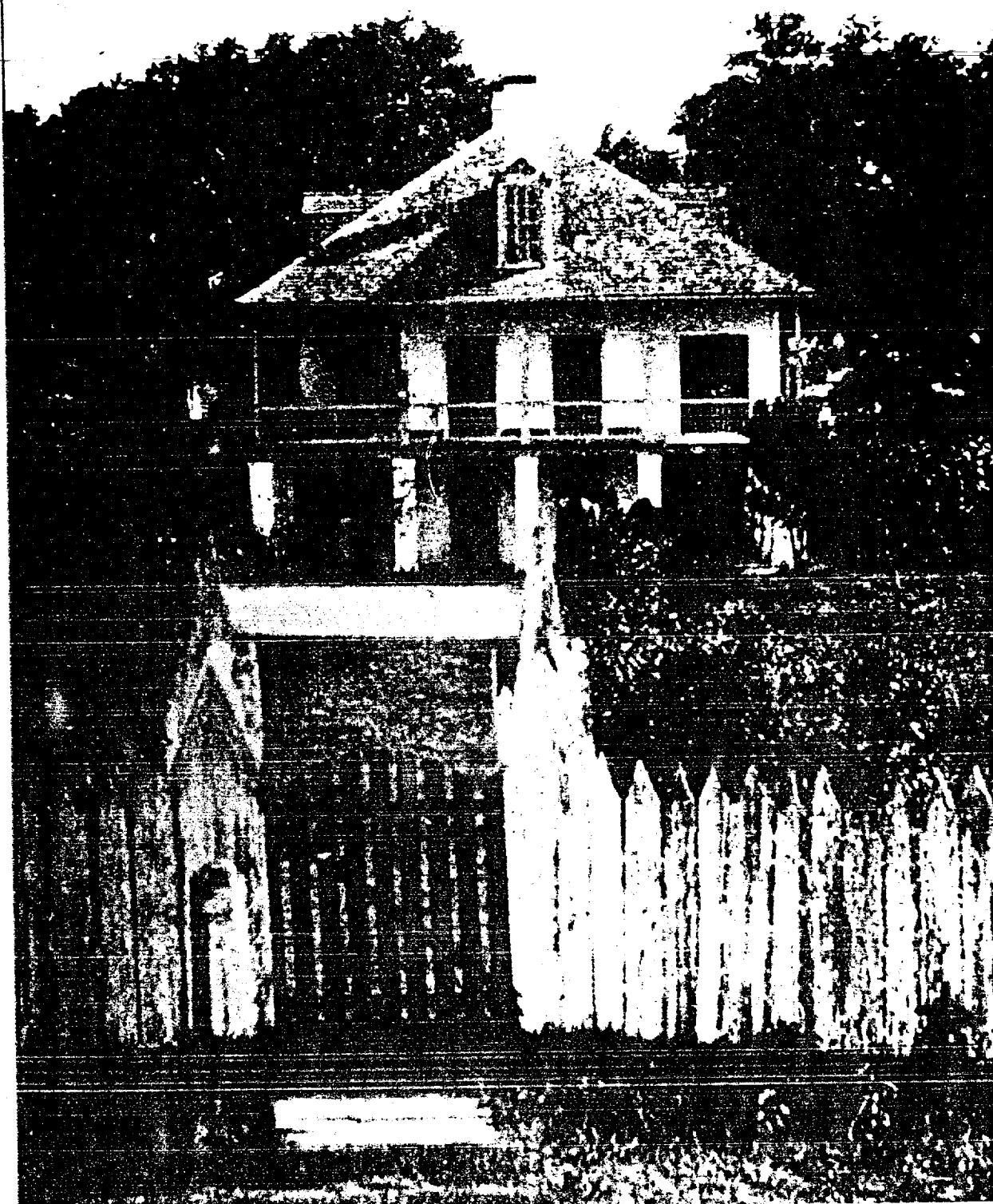
The Morgan Line, as shown by John Reid and John Henry Eaton, The Life of Andrew Jackson, 1817: detail of "Plan of an Attack made by the British Forces on the American Lines in advance of Orleans on the 8th January 1815." New Orleans Public Library.



Mound near probable site of Morgan Line, looking s.w. from Woodland Drive. Photo: B.Swanson, 3/1985.



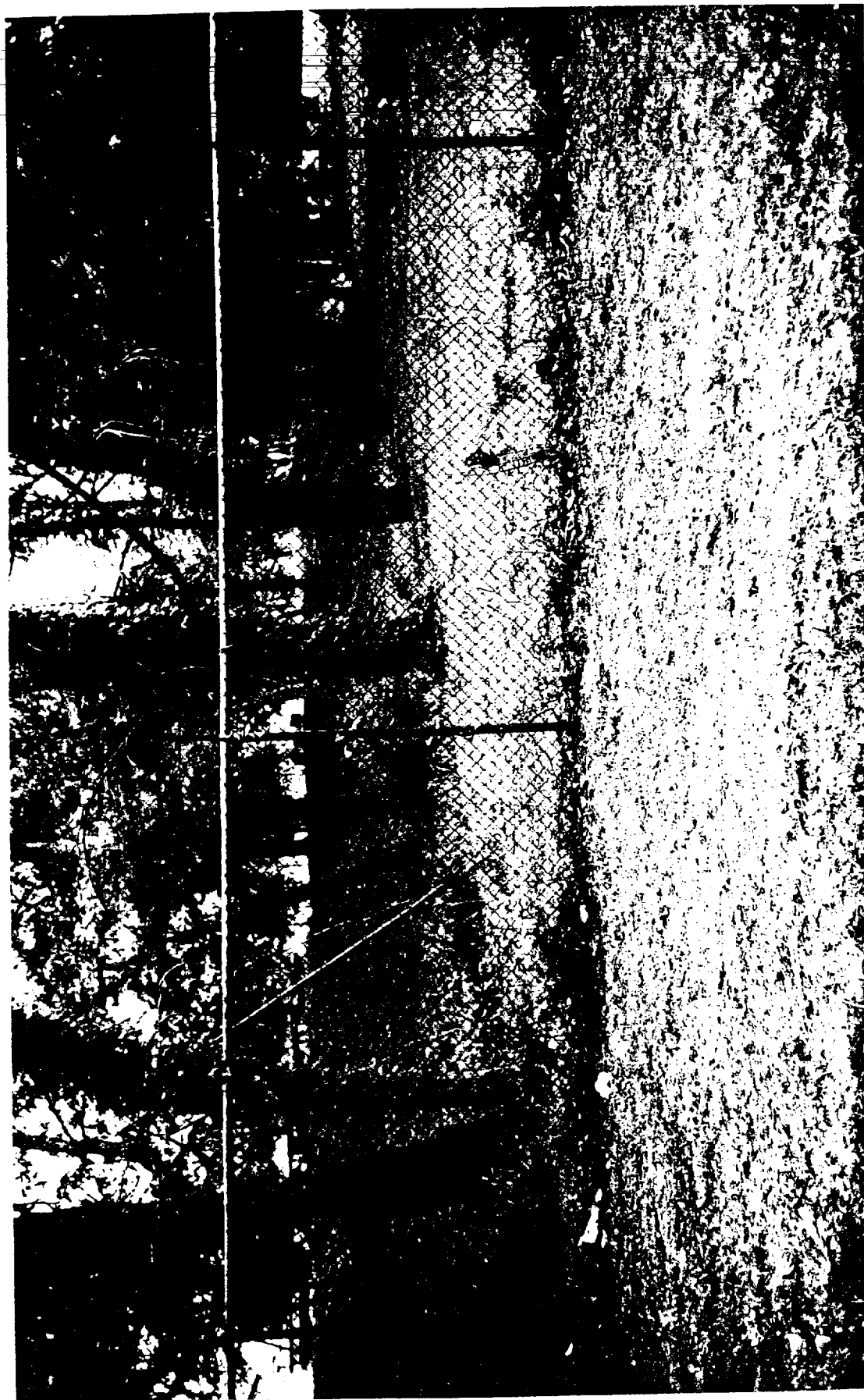
Possible remnant of Raguet Canal, down-
river from Westchester Street, looking
east. Photo: B.Swanson, March, 1985.



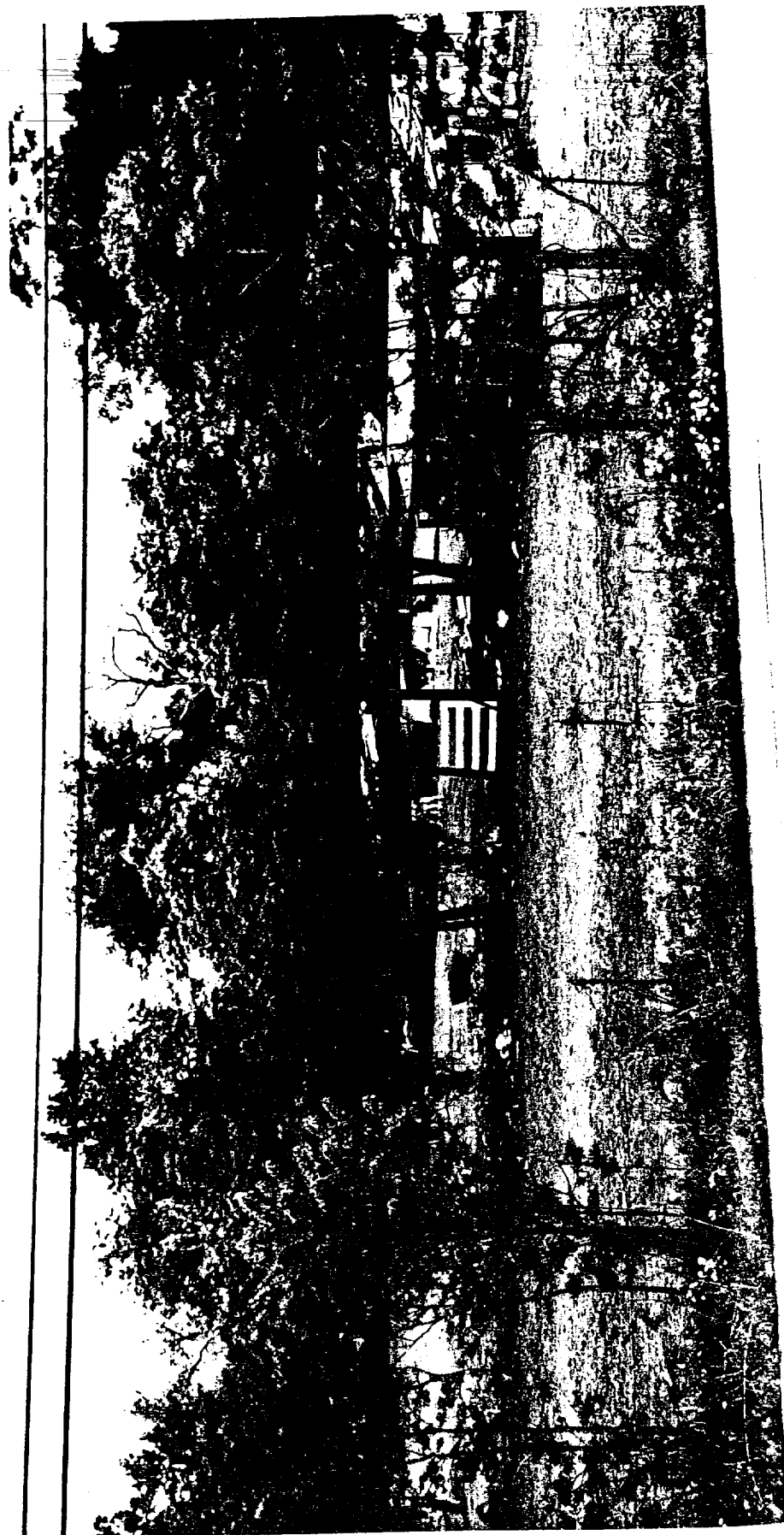
Aurora Plantation House, river facade. Photograph ca. 1900.
(Southeastern Architectural Archive, Tulane University
Library, New Orleans)



Aurora (Jourdan) Plantation House,
front facade from river road, looking
south. Photo: B.Swanson, 3/1985.



Civil War earthwork on West Bank,
possibly incorporating Latour's pro-
jected line. Looking north.
Photo: B.Swanson, 3/1985.



Probable site of Jourdan
Line, downriver from Ellen Park.
Looking s.w. Photo: B.Swanson, 3/1985.

The battleground of the West Bank stretched along the river for five miles. The fighting that took place here on January 8th is usually treated as a military action separate from that which occurred on the same day on the East Bank. One reason for this is that a delay in timing caused the West Bank battle to begin as the East Bank battle was ending. Another reason is that the claimants of victory and defeat were opposite on the two banks. Strategically, however, the two battles were integral.

Artillery fire from the West Bank was an important part of the battle on the East Bank. Although firing through the morning fog, Commodore Patterson's marine batteries 800 yards across the river strongly contributed to the heavy British losses. His guns raked the battlefield in front of Jackson's line to the distance of the cypress wood. The positioning of Patterson's guns, and the positioning of General Morgan's defense line to protect Patterson's guns, was part of Jackson's master defense plan of which his East Bank line was the main element. Pakenham realized the totality of Jackson's defenses. His five-day excavation of the Villere Canal in order to send Thornton's fleet to the West Bank was more than a diversionary action.

The success and failure of each strategic move on the part of both armies on both banks of the river cumulatively determined the final outcome of the "Battle of New Orleans." Nevertheless, it has been said that the hour of British defeat actually occurred as the banks of Villere's Canal were caving-in while Pakenham slept.

~~Early on the morning of January 8th, Lieutenant Colonel William Thornton and 560 men consisting of troops of the 85th Regiment and a few marines and sailors, crossed the Mississippi River in 30 boats. The swift current of the river carried them about a half mile down river. They were delayed in embarking, and the march back upstream caused further delay. Thus, the attack on the West Bank could not be coordinated with the East Bank attack at the first light of dawn.~~

The point on the West Bank where Thornton and his men landed and the first three miles of his route along the river road have been taken by the river. The sites of the plantation houses along this portion of his route are also now in the river. (The plantation where Thornton land was the Andry Plantation. During the mid-19th century, when the plantation was known as Stanton, a new dwelling house was built in the Greek Revival Style. This fine building was a notable example of the type and its loss was lamented in the early 20th century when the levee was set back and the river was allowed to take the house.)

The route of Thornton's force can be traced on land today beginning about at Kent Street, on what was then the Lefevre Plantation. Most of the plantation buildings on this side of the river were burned, either by the British or the Americans. Therefore, fewer records are available describing their appearance and layout. No pre-battle structures survive. This area of the West Bank has been

~~urbanized in recent years; the land has been largely leveled~~
~~and terraced for residential subdivisions. However, the~~
 positions of the troop movements can be plotted on the
 modern urbanscape, and several notable surface features of
 the battle appear to survive.

AURORA PLANTATION HOUSE

Although not a battle landmark, this house is mentioned because it was built in the year following the battle, and as a result of the battle. It is also important as a representation of the type and style of house that stood on the battlefield. It is similar in appearance to the Rodriguez House that stood in the present Chalmette park property.

Built as a two-story house with hipped roof, end dormers, a two-level gallery with piers and colonettes, and cabinets (rooms) in the rear galleries, the building has been somewhat altered. Despite box-columns in the gallery, changes to the fenestration, and the addition of a rear wing, the house retains much of its original character when viewed from the river road. Like the Rodriguez House, and contrary to the usual arrangement, the narrow end of the house faced the river.

The house was built for Peter and Bartholomew Jourdan by carpenter Isaac Rider, who also constructed "all the wood work of the sugar house, mill and purgery" to replace the Jourdan plantation buildings burned by the British as they retreated from the West Bank. The work was contracted in April 1815, three months after the battle, but was not carried

out until 1816.⁷

The original Jourdan buildings were near the upriver plantation property line, near present-day Ellen Park Place. The new buildings were erected further downriver, near the lower Jourdan property line, on the leveled earthworks of General Morgan's line.

The plantation, and the house, were later named "Aurora." The house is an important surviving example of architecture of the period and it is also important for its battle-related associations.

THE MORGAN LINE

Aurora Plantation House is traditionally said to have been built on the leveled remains of the Morgan Line, the defensive earthwork built by General David B. Morgan between January 2-7. The land on which the house sits is slightly elevated and is unnaturally uneven for some distance surrounding the house. It is undoubtedly the site of Morgan's defense work. Just upriver from the house, in a small park between Patterson Road (the river road), Woodland Drive, General Meyer Avenue and Bedford Drive is a grassy mound about four feet high. The mound could be a remnant of a portion of the defenses.

Morgan's breastwork was erected on the "Old Raguet Canal" (an abandoned mill canal of an 18th century plantation) which stretched for 6000 feet over an open plain before

7. Samuel Wilson, Jr., "Architecture of Early Sugar Plantations," p. 71, in Greenfields: Two Hundred Years of Louisiana Sugar, Center for Louisiana Studies, University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1980.

~~entering the cypress wood. When Thornton's force attacked on the morning of January 8th, Morgan's earthwork extended for only 600 feet along the canal. On the levee road was a battery containing three cannon. Halfway along the 600 foot length of the breastwork was an inverted redan, like that erected near the cypress (as shown on Dickson's large battle map and some other British maps); or a projecting redan or bastion (as shown on Latour's and Reid's maps and some British maps). Traces of what is probably the~~

RAGUET CANAL

survive along the lower side of Westchester Street. They appear as depressions two or three feet deep running between the street and the fences of the yards of residential properties downriver. The depresions are delineated in the elevation contours on the 1967 Chalmette U.S.G.S. Quadrangle map. The contour of the canal is also drawn on the 1937 Chalmette Quad. The depressions run for 5500 feet from General Meyer Avenue to the Norman Canal. The now-filled-in extention of the Raguet Canal from General Meyer to the river would have made the canal exactly 6000 feet long, the length given by Latour (p.166).

"Thus" Latour said "all that part on the right of the space of two hundred yards, where a breastwork had been begun, was without any other defense than a ditch, and exposed to be turned; this... is what actually happened." (p.116)

Latour explained that "toward the beginning of January" he was ordered by General Jackson to assist General Morgan in

choosing an advanced position for a defense line on the West Bank. Latour selected a site "nearly at equal distance from Raguet's and Jourdan's Canals, in a place where the wood inclines toward the river, leaving only a space of about nine hundred yards of open ground. The adjoining wood being impassable, works occupying this whole space could not be turned....and immediately the overseer of the works set his men to execute this line." Latour then crossed the river to report his choice to General Jackson.

The Negro slaves had constructed only a small portion of Latour's defense work when General Morgan ordered that they cease and begin work further downriver on the Raguet Canal (p.165-168). Many, including Latour, have criticised Morgan's choice of a position that could not be defended, but it was Morgan's responsibility to defend Commodore Patterson's water batteries which stretched for three quarters of a mile down the bank of the river. Patterson originally erected batteries on the West Bank to flank the fire of Jackson's line on the East Bank. In this respect, Patterson's guns played a very important role. However, they were also important for their ability to fire into the British camp. For this purpose, Patterson erected batteries further and further down the river bank. Had Morgan used Latour's more defensible position further upriver, he could not have protected all of Patterson's batteries.

In any case, Morgan's objective was doomed to failure. His 546 Louisiana Militia and 266 tired, ill-armed Kentuckians

were easily over run in their exposed position spread along the 5400 feet of open ditch that the breastwork did not cover. The Americans ran upriver. Commodore Patterson spiked his guns as best as possible and fled with his sailors upriver in the U.S.S. Louisiana. (Latour, p.168-176; Letter of Commodore Patterson to the Secretary of the Navy, 1/13/1815, in Latour's appendix p.lx-lxiv)

The flight of the Americans took them past the earthwork begun by Latour and discussed above.

LATOUR'S "PROJECTED EARTHWORK" AND THE CIVIL WAR EARTHWORK

Latour's earthwork may have been later incorporated into the river end of the surviving portion of a Civil War earthwork located between Patterson Road (the river road), Chelsea Drive, General Meyer Avenue, and Hudson Place. This earthwork has long been identified as either the "Morgan Line" or the "Jourdan Line," but it is neither. It was erected in 1861 to flank the Confederate earthworks on the East Bank and, with them, form the downriver defense of New Orleans. However, the earthwork is located approximately in the position described by Latour as the place where his defense line was begun. Therefore, the Confederate work may embody Latour's work. An archaeological investigation of this earthwork might discover two phases of construction. The large, zigzagging earthwork is an important historical landmark of the Civil War which may have additional significance if it incorporates a Battle of New Orleans defense work.

It has been protected on the grounds of the Aurora Gardens Academy.

Another possible consequence of Civil War defense construction should be mentioned in relation to the military works of 1814-15. If Battle of New Orleans earthworks downriver from the position of the Confederate defense line had not been leveled for farming purposes by 1861, it would seem that they might have been largely leveled by the Confederates in order to prevent their use in an enemy advance. The West Bank Civil War works flanked those on the East Bank which were located immediately downriver from the National Cemetery.

In their flight upriver, the Americans briefly rallied at the Jourdan Canal, which lay along the lower side of present-day Ellen Park Place; and again at the Flood Canal, which lay along the lower side of River Oaks Drive. No traces could be found of these canals in field surveys, except perhaps a small linear depression downriver from Ellen Park Place, on the river side of General Meyer Drive, at the rear of the houses facing Ellen Park. Neither could traces be found of Patterson's four water batteries. Although the river bank has not been greatly altered in this area, many years of levee and road work have probably destroyed all traces of Patterson's batteries which were located behind the 1814-15 levees. There appears to be no record of their exact former positions.

THE JOURDAN LINE

The Jourdan Line was erected after the last Battle of New Orleans was fought. It was begun on January 10 by the Engineer Barthélémy Lafon on the upriver property line of the Jourdan Plantation (Latour, p.179). The upriver bank of the Jourdan sawmill canal was the position assumed by the Americans after the British retreated from the West Bank. The British 85th Regiment under Lieutenant Colonel Gubbins had taken a position on the lower bank of the canal after halting their advance on January 8th. The Jourdan plantation building complex was located at the canal. It included the dwelling house (70 feet by 20 feet), kitchen, sugar mill, sawmill, sugar refinery, a large grange, a large storehouse, a coach house, two fowl houses, two pigeon houses, 10 double negro houses, and a small store house. All the buildings and the sugar crop and molasses in storage were burned by the British.⁸

Before the buildings were burned, they were examined by Colonel Dickson who was sent across the river by General Lambert on the afternoon of January 8th to determine if British occupation of the West Bank could be held. In his journal, he described the layout of the plantation buildings which he thought "with very little labor...might easily have been formed into a connected defense." He estimated that the

8. United States Senate, "Report of the Commissioners appointed to examine and assess the damages..." 2/17/1820, Account No.22.

~~Jourdan Canal extended for 1000 to 1100 yards from the~~
~~river to the cypress wood.~~ He thought the canal might
 be defensible, but rejected the idea. He noted that "the
 position was so far advanced (upriver) as to see into
 the right of the Enemies line, but might itself have been
 enfiladed from it." (p.72-73)

On the basis of Dickson's report that a force of
 2000 men would be required to hold the West Bank, General
 Lambert ordered withdrawal, which was effected by 9 P.M.
 that night. (Dickson, p.75)

The new defense work built at the Jourdan Canal was
 reportedly a strong one. Patterson, who also remounted
 his marine guns in "a new and more advantageous position,"
 described construction of the Jourdan Line in his January
 13, 1815 letter to the Secretary of the Navy.

From the 10th to the present date I have
 been much engaged in mounting my twelve-pounders
 along the breastwork erected by General Morgan on
 this new position, have three twenty-four pounders
 (with a furnace) to front the river, and flank
 General Jackson's lines on the opposite bank,
 from which we fired upon the enemy wherever he
 appeared. Our present position is now so strong
 that there is no thing to apprehend should the
 enemy make another attempt on this side.

The trace of the Jourdan defense line, as plotted on
 the map with this study, has been taken from that shown
 on Latour's large battle map. Except for a small farm on
 the river road, downriver from Ellen Park Place, the
 location of the Jourdan Line is occupied by modern housing
 subdivisions. Some rather pronounced rises in the ground

on the small farm could be remnants of the earthwork.

The farthest point of advance reached by the British on the West Bank was the Cazelard Plantation Canal, formerly located about midway between Nie Parkway and Tricou Drive. This position was nearly three quarters of a mile upriver in advance of Jackson's line on the opposite bank. No trace of this canal was observed in field survey. The British burned Cazelard's mill, as they did the mill on the Flood Canal.⁹

THE BOISGERVAIS LINE

The British halted at the Cazelard Plantation partly because the routed Americans had rallied a short distance upriver at a strong defense work on the Boisgervais Plantation (Latour, p.173). According to Latour, Jackson ordered that a fortified line be established on the West Bank behind General Morgan's encampment. Latour chose the Boisgervais sawmill canal. The sawmill was destroyed and the earthwork begun.¹⁰ It was built by 150 Negro slaves under the direction of Lefevre. "In six days they completed the parapet, the whole length of the canal, and levelled the earth to form a glacis on the opposite side." (p.124)

In his journal, Jean Laffite claimed to have helped construct the Boisgervais Line.

9. Ibid., Account No. 23

10. Ibid., Account No. 24

Mr. Arsene Lacarriere Latour and myself tried to devise different methods of protection against shots from the enemy. We selected a site between the river and the swamp, a short distance from the Dreux Plantation to chop down trees which we used with mud from the Boisgeurais (sic) Canal to build up horseshoe shaped fortifications to conceal us from the enemy. The greater part of our work was done "by feel" during the darkness of night. (p.60)

The trace given for this fortification on the maps with this report has been taken from Latour's large battle map. The approximate position of the earthwork was probably at Wiltz Lane and Lee's Lane, on both sides of General Meyer Avenue. Near the river, the earth on the downriver side of Wiltz Lane is elevated as much as five feet above the level of the road. Some large oak trees grow on this elevated land. The site could represent the leveled earthworks. Much of this stretch of land between Wiltz and Lee's Lanes and Richland Road is pasture or farm land, with a few houses. Traces of a canal were not noted.

At the approximate distance that the earthwork probably extended toward the swamp is a mound of earth with trees growing on it. It could be a remnant of the Boisgervais Line, or spoil deposit from the nearby Magellan Canal. (No other spoil deposits are in the area.)

POSSIBLE BRITISH BURIAL SITES ON THE WEST BANK

THE CASTANEDA PLANTATION

After the attack on Morgan's Line, Gleig said the British had three men killed and forty wounded, including

~~Colonel Thornton (p. 338). But when Dickson arrived~~
~~on the West Bank that afternoon, he noted that the 85th~~
Regiment was reduced to about 270 effectives (p.74).

The Castaneda Plantation house (no longer extant) was used by the British as a hospital before their retreat from the West Bank on January 8th.¹¹ It is a possible burial site.

The small plantation was located between Casmire and Simpson Streets. The house was set in an orange orchard. If the site of the house was not taken by the river, it would be near the river road (Patterson Road).

AURORA PLANTATION

According to local tradition, Aurora Plantation was a site of British burial, on the downriver side of the Morgan Line (below Westchester Street).

11. Ibid., Account No. 20.

"Thus terminated the fatal attack on the lines of New Orleans--a termination probably as disastrous in its consequences as any of modern date--...and I fear we have not yet experienced the full consequences of this failure, for it is certain that the Americans are greatly elevated by it in their own estimation, and it is not improbable they may be thence induced to maintain a higher tone in all their future negotiations with this country."

William Surtees, Twenty-Five Years in the Rifle Brigade, originally published 1833, p.380.